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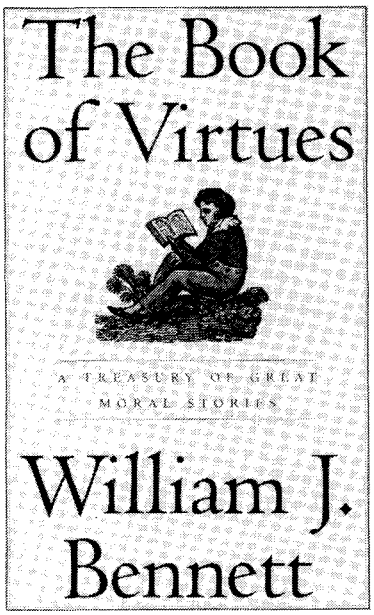

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FIRST THINGS

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April 1995 / Number 52

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On Natural Law: Carl F. H. Henry & Critics

In "Natural Law and a Nihilistic Culture" (January), Carl F. H. Henry argues that Thomistic natural law was unable to be a "cohesive social force." Dr. Henry suggests that such a natural law has lost its appeal because evolution requires that "human nature no longer be depicted in terms of a basic human essence or purpose." But natural law does not require evolutionary theory to be false; natural law is not concerned with human origins but only with our existence as a species governed by reason.

Dr. Henry characterizes natural law as a system of universal moral beliefs and notes that there is no universal agreement about any such system. But despite the absence of consensus about all moral claims, there is consensus about the fundamental moral obligation to avoid harm. For example, parricide is proscribed by all peoples. Furthermore, Aquinas explains that the universality of natural law lies only in its most common precepts and that the exigencies of human life may render a highly specific precept nonapplicable. For example, the proscription against keeping another's possession is not applicable in cases where the owner demands the possession's return in order to harm others. Borrowed weapons, thus, need not be returned to owners intent upon murder. In these cases, however, harm would be done not by the failure to return the borrowed items but by their return; hence, the universal proscription of harming others suspends the specific prescription of returning borrowed items. This attentiveness of Aquinas' natural law to the exigencies of our lives makes it resistant to a codification of all moral obligations into a highly detailed and elaborate system. The power of natural law to shape a shared consensus about moral norms does not, then, require a systematic code governing all possible contingencies of human life. . . .

Perhaps current Protestant resistance to Aquinas' natural law arises from the tendency to conflate the justification of believers with the justification of beliefs. Such a conflation makes the autonomy of Thomistic natural law appear as a rejection of the need for personal salvation. But although redemptive grace is necessary for the justification of believers, it is not necessary for the justification of every belief held by a believer. For example, the harm done to the victim, the victim's family, and the community suffice to convince most that murder is never morally justified. Such a conviction illustrates the universal accessibility of natural law. . . .

Moreover, believers ought not deny the universal accessibility of moral norms. For if moral precepts were not universally accessible and if their justification belonged only to the realm of faith, then moral norms would bind only believers. To make moral acts impossible for nonbelievers is not only to excuse nonbelievers from moral responsibility but also to excuse them from the moral responsibility of pursuing in whatever way they can the truth about God. But according to Aquinas, it is a fundamental obligation of natural law for every human to act morally and to pursue the truth about God. Aquinas holds even the pre-Christians to the obligation of acting morally and seeking God. . . .

The justification of believers is not the justification of morality. Indeed, justification is used almost equivocally in these two instances. Believers are justified only through the blood of the Redeemer. Moral claims are justified through logical arguments that appeal to the requirement of human nature and dignity. (Of course, Aquinas also argues that God as the Creator specified those requirements and through them the natural law.) We ought not forget that there is more to life than morality: charity exceeds obligation. And it is charity or fellowship with God that inspired Aquinas most. He did, after all, choose to dedicate his life to God by living in a religious order dedicated to preaching and teaching the Christian faith. . . .

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Hopefully, Aquinas' distinction between the justification of believers and the justification of moral claims will facilitate the Protestant recovery of their medieval heritage, thereby enabling them to join forces with all acting in good faith to reanimate society through a renewed emphasis not only upon the importance of religious belief but also upon the universally accessible obligations of justice and love, which are the cornerstones of natural law.

R. Mary Hayden Lemmons
Department of Philosophy
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, MN

Carl F. H. Henry provides a nice summary of various aspects of natural law and how they have influenced thinking and ethics over the years. His conclusion, with which I wholeheartedly agree, that the necessary cohesive and restorative forces needed to buttress natural law must come from beyond it seems to be well-taken and supported by his arguments.

However, Mr. Henry casts some doubt on his own belief in this conclusion when he finally declares, "The atheistic rationalism and nihilism now permeating contemporary life are inevitable consequences of the apostasy expressed in the mindless Darwinian theory of evolution." So it is remarkable that, after a scholarly and rational dissection of a number of theories, our intrepid moral philosopher is reduced to simple vituperation when it comes to the theory of Darwinian evolution—a theory far better verified than any he discusses. As the theory of evolution does not in any way contradict Scripture or any aspect of Christian faith, Mr. Henry's problem (in this case, nihilism) would appear to be a lack of the very faith he espouses as the corrective to the world's ills.

If we are to proceed into the Third Millennium with any hope of achieving Mr. Henry's goals (which are certainly those of all of us), it will be necessary to keep our hearts and minds focused on the vast cornucopia of God-revealed truths (including natural law and evolution) to avoid the errors that creep in when nihilistic uncertainty clouds our view.

Henry J. Schultz
Santa Clarita, CA

. . . Carl Henry rejects reason because of its modernist perversions: nihilism, relativism, subjectivism, and historicism. All deny the "objectivity" of the world around us. His essay uncritically accepts modern rationalism's flight from reason as if reason itself had failed. Thus he joins his opponents—Hegel, Darwin, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Marx, and other modern rationalists—in their attacks on reason.

America's Founders—up to and including Lincoln—seem to suggest that true moral law and rights result from the fruitful dialogue, or tension, between reason and revelation. Reason isolated from its divine source becomes self-destructing rationalism; unreasoned revelation becomes irrational fanaticism.

The incomparable advantage of natural law as practical reason open to revealed teaching is its universally obligating character: since all men possess the faculty of practical reason (whether they use it or not), they can legitimately be compelled by positive law to follow the law of nature. For instance, prohibiting slavery is a reasonable act of positive law because it is grounded on the natural right of all men to liberty. A slavemaster may not say, "I don't believe in natural law" to justify enslavement—even if his slave agrees!—because both are bound by the natural law rooted in the faculty of reason. . . .

And in St. John's Gospel (1:1-5) the first principle, or "beginning" (*arche*), of all creation is *Logos*. *Logos* means in Greek both "reason" and "speech," and we are told that God created nothing without *Logos*. Thus Scripture itself enshrines the principle of reason in the very nature of things, and it is that principle which supplies the ultimate, divine foundation for natural law.

To yield up natural law to the perversions of modern rationalism, as Henry does, would inevitably lead to giving up the revealed teaching as well. In our postmodern world, the process of re-evangelizing the Word of God must not be separated from the defense of natural law against the enemies of reason.

Dennis Teti
Alexandria, VA

Carl F. H. Henry's article seems to reveal much common ground between the writings of Calvin and the Catholic natural law tradition. Henry quotes William Klempa, interpreting Calvin, saying that the moral law is nothing less than the natural law and the "conscience which God has engraved on the minds of men." Earlier, however, Henry states that "knowledge of the irreducible distinction between . . . good and evil is for Calvin prephilosophical." He says that man's sinful condition works against the development of this knowledge "into a universally accepted body of truth."

This does not seem to be inherently inconsistent with the thought of St. Thomas. He sets forth certain things of the practical reason that can be known most easily. Good (what all things seek after) is to be sought, and evil avoided. There is for a person an inclination to continue in existence, . . . to know the truth about God, and to live in society; which latter two maxims translate into, "to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination."

We are given at creation this "law in our hearts." Some people are more skilled than others in understanding, verbalizing, and articulating it. Believers are supported on both legs, Divine Revelation and the law of our hearts. Both can be used as the basis of our voting in politics. We can use natural law maxims as "supplementary political resources" (Klempa), and can use them in our discourse with others. . . .

Michael Gask
Bronx, NY

Carl Henry ably puts his finger on the malaise of Western civilization—the continuing erosion of belief in an objective moral order. He also rightly shows that traditional natural law

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theory is suspect because it downplays or denies the corruption of human understanding by sin. At the same time he argues with some credibility that humanity even in its fallenness retains a fragmented knowledge of the moral law—bestowed by God at human creation and imbedded in the structures of human existence. The only moral power that can serve as a cohesive and restorative force in society, he claims, is respect for the divine commandment given at creation. He acknowledges the similarity of his position with that of Carl Braaten, who appeals to orders of creation that are blurred but not eradicated by sin.

A more biblical stance from my point of view finds the source of moral renewal in society in faith in the gospel, which illumines and recasts the law of creation. The gospel gives us the right understanding of the law and also the power to obey it. In place of an ethics of natural law or an ethics of orders of creation I propose an ethics of gospel and law, which anchors right conduct not simply in the divine imperative but in the divine redemptive act in Jesus Christ. In the light of redemption we can begin to appreciate and understand the law of God in creation. This position, I believe, is fundamentally in accord with that of the Protestant Reformers, but it has been articulated more succinctly in the modern period by theologians like Karl Barth and Jacques Ellul. I have also learned from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Emil Brunner, and Reinhold Niebuhr, all of whom assign a significant place for a "morality beyond morality," a spiritual righteousness that controverts as well as fulfills the righteousness of code and law. This note can also be discerned in the Catholic tradition of the Church, including Augustine.

One implication of a gospel-law ethic is that a real distinction (but not separation) must be made between love and justice, evangelism and social reform. Whereas all people have a rudimentary sense of justice or moral law, only people of faith have experiential contact with the sacrificial love of the cross that transcends common morality. Every person can have some intimation of justice—fair treatment, giving each one his or her due—but only people of faith can appeal to a higher standard—neighbor love—which renders justice more equitable and merciful. In the biblical view, justice is not simply treating people fairly but bringing people into a right relationship with one another. The key to both cultural viability and social reformation lies in the proclamation of the gospel, which by the Holy Spirit opens the inward eyes of men and women to the higher morality of love that critiques as well as transforms the common understanding of justice. Reinhold Niebuhr has insightfully reminded us that justice without love can become stultifying and legalistic, whereas love without justice becomes sentimental and antinomian.

What does all this mean for our society today? Since we live in a pluralistic culture and since the higher morality is veiled to those who are spiritually lost, we cannot impose the transcendent standard of the gospel upon a constituency for whom such a standard can only appear puzzling, even foolish. We can, however, appeal to the universal norm of justice or moral law of which everyone has some intimation, though only those who embrace biblical faith have a clear or adequate perception. A society that simply rests on orders of creation or natural law lacks the rejuvenating moral energy to solve the great social dilemmas, since this energy comes only from the Spirit of the living God. The task of Christians is to be light and salt in society, to point their non-Christian neighbors to a higher standard than simple justice. The ills of the world can be met only when people learn to love one another in the freedom of the Spirit, a kind of love available only through faith in Jesus Christ. When we have such faith we will then be motivated to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit those in prison, to minister to the despairing. In the meantime we should press for just laws that respect the rights of all people, but a society that relied exclusively on such laws would be barren of spiritual and moral viability.

Yes, there is an objective moral norm, but this is the divine commandment in its unity with the divine promise, the moral law illumined and transformed by the power of the gospel. This norm will generally become visible to the world at large only through revival given by the Spirit of God and enacted through preaching, prayer, and perhaps also fasting. I salute Carl Henry for presenting a telling critique of traditional natural law theory, but I urge him to go beyond an appeal to God's commandment and see the law and the gospel in their dynamic unity as the enduring moral standard for all people in every culture and religion, though most of them do not yet have the eyes to see or the ears to hear.

Donald G. Bloesch
Dubuque Theological Seminary

Carl F. H. Henry summons natural law to do battle against the behemoth of contemporary nihilistic culture. The outcome of this battle is of apocalyptic significance: "Upon the resolution of this conflict may well turn the moral fortunes of the Western world, and beyond that, ultimately, the entire planet." Wow! But Henry doesn't help his cause much by setting potential allies against each other. There are in fact many supporters of the idea of a natural moral law who approach it from different philosophical and theological perspectives. To my mind, that's the beauty of it. If the idea of natural law is valid at all, it means that all people participate in common structures of truth, beauty, and goodness whether they know and confess the biblical God or not. Carl Henry seems to want only those on board who share his version of an orthodox evangelical perspective. He writes: "For evangelical Christianity the content of morality turns on divine revelation and the Bible. . . . Only what God says in Scripture and has disclosed in Christ is normative." In the interest of baptizing natural law, Henry has weakened it and restricted its scope by making its normativity dependent on biblical revelation.

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Perhaps it is Henry's intention to contribute something positive to the construction of an ecumenical consensus on natural law. We need all the friends we can get if we are to fight off the beast of nihilism. But Henry seems determined to set the Reformers against the natural law tradition in Roman Catholic moral teaching. Thus he reinforces the traditional caricature of Thomas Aquinas, a caricature that has been challenged by current Thomist scholarship. Carl Henry says: "The Reformers in principle questioned the epistemic viability of natural law theory." I am not so sure. Henry himself cites the statement by William Klempa that for twentieth-century scholarship Calvin's teaching on natural law is "a major battleground."

Apparently there is no consensus among Calvin scholars. Some deny that Calvin taught a doctrine of natural law, while others affirm it. But if Calvin scholars are in such disagreement on the issue, how can Henry be so confident in drawing sharp lines of difference between Calvin and Thomas, as he does? The issue is whether Thomas' doctrine of natural law is constructed totally without regard to God's revelation and the whole of Christian theology, whether for him the natural law is purely autonomous, playing into the hands of a godless world and its emergent nihilistic culture. So Henry states: "Thomas may have thought that he was directing Aristotelian thought God-ward; instead, he grounded Christian theism and morality on secular turf." Surely this is wrong interpretation. To the contrary, Thomas said: "The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at the creation." I think both Luther and Calvin would agree.

I do not think it is very helpful to imagine that one of our heroes—Thomas, Luther, or Calvin—or the traditions that evolved therefrom developed a theological doctrine of natural law radically different from the others and to which the others need only submit. The radical distinctions have been constructed later in the interest of supporting interconfessional rivalries and opposing identities. Let us rather work toward a truly ecumenical theology of the natural moral law universally valid in human experience, history, and the world.

Carl Henry's evangelical theology can surely also contribute something to a possible ecumenical consensus. A good sign of this is that though a Calvinist he does not write disapprovingly of the "orders of creation ethic" which he rightly attributes to me and to the Lutheran tradition. However, he laments that I "surrender to negative biblical criticism the literal historical significance of the Genesis creation account." I do not feel so guilty about this because I am rather convinced that the concept of "literal history" is alien to the biblical text and is not necessary or even useful in establishing its authority.

Apart from that, Carl Henry does observe a possible problem with my own theology of natural law in that I insist "that natural law must be correlated with eschatology." He adds that some think this relativizes the universal applicability of justice. I would respond that a comprehensive theological *interpretation* of such things as natural law, human rights, and social justice does not limit their general applicability. As Christians we see with our own eyes, but *what we see* can be seen by others also with their eyes. Natural law does not lie in the eye of the beholder. Natural law is present and operative in all persons and societies; its principles are universal and its authority is immutable, underlying all cultural relativities and historical variations, because God is the author of natural law. But natural law written into the "way things are made" is not autonomous, as though it functions on its own independently of the ongoing creative and providential rule of the living God. A full theological interpretation of the natural moral law will necessarily orient it not only to the doctrine of creation and providence but also to Christology and eschatology. The reason is that the whole law of God in all its expressions is fulfilled in Christ: "For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified." (Romans 10:14)

The theological differences between our Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran traditions on natural law need not be seen as mutually contradictory but capable of contributing to a more comprehensive theological interpretation of the moral law as the work of divine grace. No doubt elements in these traditions need to be cancelled for the sake of a higher synthesis, but that is already happening through the self-critical reflections going on in each of the traditions. Thus, to speak as a Lutheran, the sharply dichotomous view of the two kingdoms has yielded to a greater sense of their unity within the economy of God's Trinitarian activity in the world. The Thomist "nature and grace," the Lutheran "two kingdoms," and the Calvinist "covenant" theologies will all take a seat at the ecumenical roundtable and have something to teach the others. And Henry will be at the table, but so will Barth, despite Henry's protestations to the contrary.

Carl E. Braaten
Center for Catholic and
Evangelical Theology
Northfield, MN

Carl Henry puts his finger on the Achilles' heel in the natural law argument. It is that this law, in practice, is notoriously ambiguous and hard to identify. After all, despite the presence of natural law undergirding American life, 70 percent of the public still say that there is no such thing as absolute truth (truth applicable to all people in all times and places) and 66 percent say the same of moral absolutes. Worse yet is the case of *Humanae Vitae*, whose argument against artificial means of contraception Pope Paul VI grounded in natural law—yet this law is not at all self-evident to the overwhelming majority of Catholics who use contraceptives.

It is important, however, that the baby not be lost in the disappearing bathwater. While the *content* of natu-

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ral revelation is fractured both by sin and culture, the *capacity* of the human being for moral experience is unaffected by either. That is one of the truly baffling dilemmas of contemporary experience. Despite the postmodern assault on all morality, and despite our present cultural spiral into a therapeutic vision of the world in which all of reality is psychologized so that the moral dimension is lost entirely, people still are compelled, by their own nature, to speak in moral categories. That is why Christian faith can still be commended to the conscience as true and why postmodern skeptics inadvertently appeal to this same capacity by commending their views as right.

David F. Wells
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
South Hamilton, MA

Dr. Henry writes that "Thomas may have thought that he was directing Aristotelian thought God-ward; instead, he grounded Christian theism and morality on secular turf." No doubt, some modern philosophers and theologians, including "Thomists" of a loose observance, speak as though the "secular" is the same thing as the "natural." This equation suits various modern efforts to carve out a sphere of autonomy for human reason, especially in matters of ethics. Once the "secular" is substituted for the "natural," however, the nature-grace distinction is completely changed: the "natural" is no longer what God creates and governs, nor what grace perfects.

But it is an anachronism to read this back into St. Thomas' theology. Nature and the natural can mean different things, depending upon what problem is being addressed, or what distinction is being drawn. The concept of "nature" can be predicated of both God and angels; the word "secular" usually refers to diocesan priests. In any case, one can confidently assert that the "secular" does not track the "natural," and in fact our familiar concept of the "secular" forms no part of the repertoire of ideas and distinctions in St. Thomas.

About the matter of "grounding." The natural law is always defined by Thomas in reference to the eternal law: "It should be said that the natural law is a participation of the eternal law, and therefore endures without change owing to the unchangeableness and perfection of the divine reason." The idea that natural law is grounded in, rather than known by, human reason would subvert the metaphysical order laid out in the *Summa.* While many things are known from the bottom up, as it were, they are not "grounded" in this way. This system, after all is a neo-Platonic scheme of participation.

I suspect that Catholics and evangelicals differ somewhat in their estimation of what role philosophy should play in theological inquiry. Yet Christian theology, whether Catholic or evangelical, has to protect nature and the natural from being mischaracterized as a "secular" sphere independent of, or immune from, God. As St. Bernard remarked in his sermons on the Song of Songs: "He claims our earth not as his fief but as his motherland. And why not? He receives from it his Bride and his very body. . . . As Lord he rules over it; as Creator, he rules over it; as Bridegroom, he shares it." Not to put too fine a point on it, but for Catholics "the earth" is not "secular turf."

Russell Hittinger
School of Philosophy
Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

Man, the Bible tells us, is created in God's image. Human beings, unlike nonhuman creatures, possess reason and freedom. They can choose to bring into being what is worth bringing into being but might otherwise not be. Human choosing, then, like divine choosing, is creative. But creative choosing presupposes *reasons* for choice and action; and such reasons can be provided only by ends or purposes that are *understood* as choiceworthy.

A critical reflective account of the "intelligible goods" that provide the most basic reasons for choice and action, and of the norms of reasonableness in choosing that are entailed by principles directing choice and action towards these goods and away from what is contrary to them, is a natural law theory. To offer such an account is in no way to deny God's existence, creativity, authority, revelation, or active role in human affairs. It is merely to acknowledge that God directs men toward their proper end by endowing them, not with instinct, but with practical reason. So endowed, man is, in his creative freedom, truly God's image.

Far from being unbiblical, natural law theorizing is invited by biblical anthropology. Why, then, is a great Bible-believing Christian such as Carl F. H. Henry so skeptical about it?

Henry says that natural law theory "affirms . . . that all human beings share a set of ethical norms and imperatives that they commonly perceive without dependence on supernatural disclosure and illumination." He summarizes natural law theory as holding that "humanity . . . universally knows a body of morally binding laws that shape a common pattern of social behavior." He takes Thomists in particular to be claiming "that there exists a universally shared body or system of moral beliefs."

But neither I nor any natural law theorist known to me holds a view remotely like this. Contemporary natural law theorists of every stripe are cognizant of the wide diversity of moral views and commitments, not only across cultures, but within cultures such as our own. While we maintain that moral norms are intelligible and, thus, accessible to reason, we are under no illusions regarding the fact of moral diversity.

As for what "humanity universally knows," we hold only that the most basic principles of natural law, principles which themselves refer to the multiplicity of ends that provide basic (i.e., noninstrumental) reasons for action, are common to humanity. (And even with respect to these principles, understanding can be impeded and even defeated by stupidity, prejudice, carelessness, and other factors that block understanding in every field of intellectual endeavor.) But these principles, considered indi-

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vidually, *create moral questions* by providing incompatible—and thus competing—reasons for action. To *solve* such questions, the basic principles must be put to work together, and their implications for fully reasonable choosing must be derived. The fruit of such a derivation are general moral norms such as the golden rule of fairness and the Pauline principle that evil may not be done even for the sake of producing good consequences, together with the more specific norms (e.g., do not lie, steal, kill the innocent) that are, in turn, derived from them.

While all reasonable persons are capable, in principle, of grasping the principles of natural law, the diversity of moral views—indeed the diversity of views among natural law theorists—is no embarrassment to natural law theory. Moral disagreements among reasonable people warrant the conclusion that not all moral truths are obvious, not all moral questions are easy. They do not warrant the conclusion that moral truth is inaccessible to reason.

Robert P. George
Department of Politics
Princeton University

Carl F. H. Henry replies:

I'm pleased that my article on natural law theory has evoked wide interest. Much in this exchange, including letters posted direct to me, is worthy of sustained interaction. But for now I must rely on these brief comments:

1. I note the impressive disagreement among my correspondents over the nature and value of natural law. I shall await with interest Dr. Lemmons' forthcoming reconsideration of the Thomist version. The claim that "the harm done to the victim, the victim's family, and the community suffices to convince *most* that murder is *never* justified [emphasis added]" should be referred for contemplation to Hitler and the Nazis and to Mao's Red Guards.

2. To Mr. Schultz's approving comments, which he supplements by an insistence that "the theory of evolution does not in any way contradict Scripture or any aspect of the Christian faith," I would ask which of the competing theories he regards as holding universal scientific and philosophic approval.

3. As to Mr. Teti's claim that I reject reason, nothing could be further from the truth. I do reject prideful claims for and by philosophical reasoning, which many philosophers now concede has reached a dead end. Whether the American Founders championed natural law theory is quite another issue. My essay referred to scholars who bracket such claims with a revelatory creation ethic.

4. With Mr. Gask I would agree that much in Thomas Aquinas is compatible with Reformation thought. Thomas personally believed that God is the source of the moral order. But his formulation of natural law and natural theology, which excluded any appeal to God and revelation and professed to demonstrate the existence of God and of universally shared ethical imperatives, fails, as I see it, to fulfill its promise.

5. Dr. Bloesch has rightly grasped the thrust of my essay and commends my critique of natural law theory. Instead of faulting it, he affirms a quasi-Barthian alternative. This is not the place to debate his view other than to comment that justice, as I see it, is the form that neighbor love takes in community relationships. Dr. Bloesch insists that apart from the Gospel most people "do not yet have the eyes to see or ears to hear" the enduring moral standard. But in that case can they be declared culpable for rejecting it? The human predicament, as I see it, is more volitional than cognitive, though sin invades the total personality.

6. Dr. Braaten emphasizes that much current Thomism rejects traditional Thomist theory. In the interest of as wide an assault as possible on contemporary nihilism he ecumenically welcomes as inclusive a spectrum of approaches as possible except for mine (because it links the moral crisis centrally to human defection from the self-revealing Cre-

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ator and the scriptural revelation). I do not think that Dr. Braaten's alternative forfeiture of literal scriptural history can be compensated for by a species of natural law.

I do not deny that "all people participate in common structures" of truth and goodness; why and how and with what consequences are the issues. Let me say again that Thomas does not deny the priority of God. But in stating the case for natural law and natural theology he excludes an appeal to God and bases the argument on empirical considerations.

There is much that I respect in Dr. Braaten's many contributions, and even regarding moral law I heartily agree with some emphases. But the emphasis that diverse and contrary and even contradictory views can serve the purpose of a coordinate witness troubles me. It seems ultimately to put truth on a cross.

7. Dr. Wells squarely strikes the nail on the head. Sinful humanity cannot totally escape the shattered *imago Dei*. The sinner's rebellious predicament is more volitional than cognitive. Yet conscience hails the rebellious human anticipatively before the judgment throne of God. Scripture verifies which of our interpretations of general revelation are authentic.

8. Regarding Dr. Hittinger's protest, my point here is not all that subtle. It merely reflects the standard disagreement over whether Thomas Christianized Aristotle or Aristotelianized Christianity.

9. With Dr. George I agree that the moral crisis is due not to the obscurity of divine revelation (which penetrates the mind and conscience of humanity) but to a rebellious will; in short, the problem is more volitional than epistemological. Fallen mankind may not be free to do the will of God, but nonetheless has choice. Mankind is not under a metaphysical necessity or epistemological necessity to distort or deflect divine revelation, but chooses to do so.

The Giving Tree: What Gives?

"The Giving Tree: A Symposium" (January) was a rare treat, both the original tale and the response to it. I expect it will elicit many letters from your readers. Here is my two cents' worth.

To me, the boy and the tree are not two different people but two parts of the same person. The tree is the part of the boy that lives for his own sake. It is the part of him that gives to himself, not to career, wife, family. The tree is his talents, his gifts, his beauty, his passion for himself, his genius. The story tells not of one person expending herself for another but of the boy himself being consumed by his own life, used up by his experiences, drives, responsibilities.

As a child he lives with the tree. As an adolescent he begins to look outward from the tree. As a man he visits, but not to "stop and stare," only to collect what he needs. His gifts he expends for others, bypassing himself. At the end he returns to be with the tree again. Now he just sits on the tree, looking off into the distance. His passion is spent. All he can do is hold himself up. But the tree still has its heart and its roots—the boy still has his heart, his roots, his memories, and his beginning with which he seeks to be reunited. And he finds that here indeed he can rest. . . .

June McIntosh
Canastota, NY

Only a bunch of academics could fall for the old propagandist's ploy that because something is written it must be true, and because it's impenetrably obscure it must be deep. Shel Silverstein's bittersweet little kiddy kitsch, *The Giving Tree*, is neither literature nor deep. Analyzing it with the same intellectual artillery one would bring to discover the meaning of "The Grand Inquisitor" in *The Brothers Karamazov* is misdirected overkill.

What we have is two incomplete short stories—one a potentially lovely tale that begins with a kid and a tree. When Silverstein can't finish that in the way it started, he shifts abruptly to a second story, one without a beginning, about a nice kid gone rapaciously adult. There is no transition, no character development, or anything to suggest why an adult is a kid gone bad, except that that theme is a central one to left-wingers who write children's books.

Tom Holzel
Concord, MA

I was given a gift subscription to your publication for Christmas and your January issue was my introduction. Having been given the impression that FIRST THINGS was oriented to religion and especially to its Christian view, I was surprised by the various analyses of *The Giving Tree* by your symposium. Whether or not intended by the author, a very simple and beautiful view of God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is variously described by its members in esoteric terms of humanistic psychobabble so prevalent in this country's "christianity," both on the right and on the left.

Whether one views the tree as the Father giving His Son or Jesus as the giver of His human life, God gives all He has to each of us unconditionally for our salvation. The author's reference to the tree in feminine terms gives Trinitarian support to this view since the fruits of the spirit listed in Galatians 5:22—open to and necessary for all Christians, male and female—are in essence our feminine component, so often missing in American males, and now diminishing in American females: love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity.

The boy represents every one of us, loved by God and loving Him in return in our childhood. The story relates our inevitable distancing of ourselves from that God, a process that starts and progresses at different stages of life for each of us, but that occurs in one degree or another in all of us, without exception, as we reach for the false god of self-esteem, which is the only god the world can offer. Unfortunately, the old man at the end of the story only represents some of us—if we believe Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13-14, a minority of us—who discover the falsity and return before death to our roots—our Creator and only true God—for eternal rest.

James E. Hamilton
Coronado, CA

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You've done a valuable service in presenting a symposium on *The Giving Tree*, whose title's lack of irony startles and dismays those who chronicle the routine disorders our age accepts as health.

Nearly as disturbing as the story itself is the fact that so few of your discussants identified its tainted depiction of love between parent and child. Jean Bethke Elshtain points to its load of "passive-aggressive nonsense," and to the horrible victory won by the tree in the dependency and sadness of the male. Timothy Fuller's gnomic response indicates his reservations. But it is, as so often, the good sense and insight of Midge Decter that gets nearest the core of the matter: Silverstein's negative portrayal of maturity and his disturbing promotion of an old cliché: the martyr-mother whose own neediness teaches dependency, fatigue, and despair.

There are some issues especially pertinent to children today not addressed by any of the discussants, pro or con. Even Decter's valuable reminder of the real experience of children, attending to pictures more than words, barely glances at the damaging way *The Giving Tree* handles gender and reflects the decay of contemporary families.

The very basis of Silverstein's story reflects an aspect of contemporary life so pervasive that it has become all but invisible. Where is the father? This lack is part of the grosser absence in the story of all relationships except the stiflingly exclusive and disturbingly eroticized world of the tree and child. Not only words, but tone and, above all, pictures tell us that neither tree nor boy thrive as the boy grows. Both are destroyed, and Decter and some other critics note that the process of maturity is presented in an almost totally negative light. Both are destroyed but the tree gets her wish: despite acquiring a paunch, the boy remains a boy—not a happy, eager child but a weak, dependent, and unappealing one who needs the tree for everything. . . .

Mary Ann Glendon gets it right in her closing remarks. Future decades will look back in pity and horror at the stories our culture considers classics for children. The images of tainted giving and of gender, particularly the ugly images of boys and men, speak volumes of what we expect and accept.

Eugene Narrett
Maynard, MA

. . . The boy comes back a last time, old and hunched, exhausted and alone. The tree gives him gladly all it has left, its stump to sit on. To have him receive that final gift, small as it is, and thus to be not alone, makes the tree happy to "The End." The man's "The End," however, is to sit without energy or further desire on the stump, symbol that nothing he asked for has ever been withheld from him, numbly miserable.

(The Rev.) Paul G. Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN

Thank you for the symposium on *The Giving Tree*. I relate this tale to God's grace and parental love. I do not see it as necessarily cruel and selfish on the part of "Boy." The giving was one way, but isn't God's grace also one way? What would you have Boy do? . . .

My ninety-three-year-old father now lies in a nursing home. He has given my siblings and me far more than we have or were able to give him. There is nothing we can give him now but our company. Would he be better off if we had taken less? I doubt it. Would he have enjoyed it more if his assets were distributed to strangers or used to pay taxes? Some of this will occur and he is unhappy about it. I do not think Dad ever wanted anything back from us except our presence and our company, especially after mother died.

Since both parties, the tree and the boy, were happy, I think it was a good deal for both.

Gerald E. Kiltz
Stanley, VA

The symposium on *The Giving Tree* provided an interesting discussion on giving, selfishness, and human love. It reminded me of what Thomas Merton wrote in *No Man Is an Island* about the nature of love, which is relevant to this discussion.

> A happiness that is sought for ourselves alone can never be found: for a happiness that is diminished by being shared is not big enough to make us happy. . . .
>
> Yet there can never be happiness in compulsion. It is not enough for love to be shared: it must be shared freely. That is to say it must be given, not merely taken. Unselfish love that is poured out upon a selfish object does not bring perfect happiness: not because love requires a return or a reward for loving, but because it rests in the happiness of the beloved. And if the one loved receives love selfishly, the love is not satisfied. He sees that his love has failed to make the beloved happy. It has not awakened his capacity for unselfish love. . . .
>
> The gift of love is the gift of the power and the capacity to love, and, therefore, to give love with full effect is also to receive it. So, love can only be kept by being given away, and it can only be given perfectly when it is also received.

From this perspective, the tree's love went unfulfilled because it was visited upon a selfish object. The tree's obligation to love was fulfilled, but not the higher expectation that its love transform the beloved into an unselfish lover.

In our modern world, we take offense when people attempt to change us whether by love or any other power. But this is exactly what we find in the love of God in the incarnation of Christ. The gift of Christ to this world was not just to give out of obligation or impetus to give, but to love to transform those God loves. A love expressed out of obligation or necessity is ultimately selfish, because the love is satisfied, not in the change in the beloved, but in their own having fulfilled the call to love. It is for this reason that *The Giving Tree* is ultimately an inade-

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quate picture of the way love should be expressed between people.

(The Rev.) Edwin R. Brenegar III
Davis & Elkins College
Elkins, WV

. . . In considering this book, there are two salient points that should not be overlooked:

(1) Great "children's stories" from Aesop to Andersen to Silverstein are actually written for adults—who can then use the stories to teach and even to entertain children.

(2) Whether he intended it or not, Silverstein actually wrote a fable of divine love—the self-sacrificing love of Christ for a humanity that eagerly takes, but sometimes in the end begins to realize—just a little—that the divine love is always there.

Incidentally, I became acquainted with *The Giving Tree* a few years ago when my thirty-something daughter gave me a copy for Mother's Day—as a talisman of our understanding love.

I fear that most of your reviewers are a bit short on understanding poetic statements of idealized sacrificial Christian love.

Jean Harmon
Silver Springs, MD

. . . Had I been the author of *The Giving Tree*, I would have made the same gender assignments to the boy and the tree. However, I can't help but wonder if the attacks on the boy's character by the symposium participants would have been made had the players been "old man tree" and Lucy.

Donald G. Hilker
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Ungracious and Mean-Spirited

James Nuechterlein's article on political correctness in sports writing ("The Wide World of Sports," January) was marred by a curiously bitter, and digressive, paragraph on Canadian indulgence in anti-American rhetoric. I am one Canadian who does not engage in such fruitless bad manners. I also oppose my countrymen who act as if Canada's identity is most easily established by criticizing anything American. Therefore, I feel I have the credentials to call Mr. Nuechterlein to account for his petulant dismissal of this "improbable nation," as he calls Canada. . . .

I profoundly wish we Canadians would operate differently with respect to our American neighbors, however frustrated we may be with America's legendary ignorance of all things Canadian. But I do remember that this improbable nation was founded precisely *in opposition to* your Revolution. This contrariness has continued to this day, made worse perhaps by the immense difference in our sizes and our consequent sibling jealousy. But this differentiates us from no other nation on earth. They all share this love-hate relationship with the world's largest and most prosperous nation. But I had hoped that Mr. Nuechterlein, imperial citizen of "the Empire to the South," would have demonstrated a greater graciousness and less mean-spiritedness in his remarks, especially since they had nothing at all to do with proving his contention that sports writing has embraced political correctness.

W. J. Douglas Ball
Mississauga, Ontario

Proportionalism Defended

Richard John Neuhaus is unfair in his flippant dismissal of the moral "proportionalist" theologians ("Moral Theology at Its Pique," Public Square, January). These good men have dedicated their lives to fulfill a recognized charism in the Church, and in their writings have attempted to be faithful to its magisterium in a nuanced, careful theological analysis. The important truths rediscovered in their thorough study of traditional Christian morality work as a dialectical corrective to maintain the health of the "splendor of truth" that is the Church's mandate to announce to the world.

The proportionalists remind us that moral method is much more sophisticated and complex than simply discovering moral laws and following them. They rightly insist that method should be both deontological and consequential, hence proportionalism. Because moral choice must contain those transcendent values that image the Creator and that are spelled out in the Ten Commandments, a deontological process is appropriate. But secondly, the proportionalists have retrieved the Thomistic understanding that every moral choice must have those consequences which make the moral agent into a co-creative, co-provident partner to God—hence the need for consequential reasoning in moral choice. When humans fail to seriously take consequences into consideration, they miss the mark in living up to this God-delegated partnership. . . .

In addition, the proportionalists have shown how human morality serves human dignity. In this they are obediently responding to the Spirit who in the "signs of the times" is raising the consciousness of human dignity throughout the human family. Hence, one cannot speak of the "moral" at all until what is essentially human is engaged in choice, i.e., the mind and the free and unmanipulated human will. And this, simply put, is what Richard McCormack means by "intentionality." In our grace-enabled moral choices each of us self-create our fundamental option for God through the reasoned and free choice of Him implicit in every morally good decision. The demands of human dignity cannot be satisfied if moral choice is pictured primarily as a "blind" obedience to authority; it must be seen as a God-bestowed glorious human ability to co-create good things.

Thus, in moral method, deontology without consideration of consequences is reductionist. Jesus' parable about the talents applies: it is not enough to bury the talent given—a simple deontological-follow-the-law approach; one must use one's moral talents to be God's co-creative partner in response to this call in making us moral beings. This is the proportionalists' insight.

Macon Kathleen Boczek
Novelty, OH

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THIS TIME

Lutheran Blues

James Nuechterlein

I was born into a Lutheran Christian family, was baptized and confirmed within the Lutheran Church, and, God willing, will die in that communion. Unlike a number of Lutheran colleagues and friends who have become Roman Catholics or are tempted in that direction, I have never seriously contemplated leaving Wittenberg for Rome. I refuse to define myself as a Protestant, but I find it theologically impossible to call myself a catholic except in the lower case. The Augsburg *Confession of 1530* seems to me a thoroughly persuasive exposition of the essentials of the Christian faith.

I offer the above deposition as preface to confessing my dismay—I cannot say despair because despair is a sin—over the state of Lutheranism in America today. The two major U.S. Lutheran church bodies are the conservative Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the mainstream Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Within both of these churches one can find large numbers of local congregations in which orthodox faith, sacramental integrity, sound preaching, and missions of charity live and flourish. But both church bodies display at their center symptoms of decay and fatigue that make it difficult to sustain hopes for their long-term health.

The LCMS, in which I grew up, tore itself apart during the early 1970s in a desperate struggle over the interpretation of Scripture. All Lutherans affirm the Bible as the inspired word of God and the source and norm of doctrinal fidelity. But Lutherans do not all mean the same thing when they speak of inspiration. The LCMS insists on a belief in verbal inspiration that makes the Bible incapable of error on any point and requires that it be read as expressing literal truth on all matters to which it addresses itself, whether or not those matters are of intrinsic theological significance. Other Lutherans understand infallibility and inerrancy to refer to issues essential to the Gospel, and they would not insist, as would Missourians, that skepticism concerning, say, the historicity of Adam and Eve undermines scriptural authority. On this point, I am convinced, the LCMS has entrenched itself in an untenable position. Insistence on literal inerrancy, whatever its uses in arresting doctrinal laxity, leaves the LCMS vulnerable to charges of biblicist obscurantism.

A related problem for Missouri is its susceptibility to the sentimental evangelicalism and preoccupation with church growth that pervades contemporary conservative Protestantism. The LCMS has a long history of flirting with neo-fundamentalism, and its narrow biblicism puts it in perpetual danger of absorption into the evangelical Protestant world. Missouri's long tradition of confessional orthodoxy resists such absorption, but styles of evangelical piety alien to the Lutheran tradition are now widespread in the Synod.

As for the ELCA, of which I am now a member (I prefer to say that I belong to a congregation that holds membership in the ELCA), it has succumbed to the weaknesses of the liberal Protestant mainline at a rate faster than even the most jaded cynics anticipated at its founding in 1987. As everywhere else in liberal Protestantism, its central headquarters is staffed by modish theological bureaucrats in thrall to the latest liberationist, feminist, and multiculturalist whims. It governs itself, at every level, according to a race-and-gender quota system that ensures politically and theologically correct outcomes. Many of its seminaries have been similarly infected (though

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significant pockets of resistance remain in place).

The upshot is drearily typical of the Protestant mainline—a sour estrangement between a self-consciously "prophetic" national bureaucracy and a mostly traditionalist membership that puzzles over what went wrong and wonders what might be done to set things right. (Given the iron law of oligarchy and the dysfunctional culture of niceness that dominates religious discourse, the answer is, "not much.") Protests are mounted, traditionalist caucuses and newsletters spring up, mutterings are heard about new or reorganized institutional structures. And among the Lutherans, as among all the other oldline Protestants, not a lot changes.

It is not mere nostalgia that induces my regret over the erosion—at both ends of the theological spectrum—of Lutheran distinctiveness. The only point of remaining Lutheran in an ecumenical age is if one believes that Lutheranism has something of continuing value to offer within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Confessional Lutherans rightly insist on the centrality of the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. That is the touchstone of the Reformation heritage, and Lutherans who depart from it have forsaken their reason for being Lutheran in the first place.

But this understanding of the doctrine of justification is not peculiar to Lutherans. What is more precisely Lutheran is the setting of that doctrine in a dialectical theological framework. The Lutheran dialectic takes a variety of forms: the emphasis on the Law/Gospel distinction as hermeneutical principle and theological guide; the understanding of social ethics and responsibilities according to the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms; the conception of the human condition as essentially *Simul*—we are at once, Luther insisted, sinners and saints, enemies of God and yet fully redeemed participants in His eternal glory.

There is not room here for a full explication of these distinctively Lutheran perspectives. But they command attention because they conform to the reality of our lives. They fit the rough contrariness of our experience; they are at once contradictory and true. We yearn to be followers of God even as we rebel against His injunctions. The Lutheran *Simul* captures our reality better than do visions of perfection or divinization or anticipation of the eschaton. Lutheranism engages us in our doubled condition and reminds us of its founder's central insight, confessed as he died, that we are all beggars before God. Day by day, Luther understood, we die and rise again. There is no straight line toward the beatific vision. There is only the perennial reminder of our baptismal identity: He who gave us life will, in the face of all our perversities, call us back to Himself.

These understandings are not, of course, exclusive to Lutheranism. They are part of the Christian patrimony. St. Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans of the good that he would that he did not and of the evil that he would not that he did. But it is within the Lutheran tradition that the antinomies of the faith have been most vibrantly kept alive.

I remain a Lutheran because I find its construal of the human reality and the divine dispensation persuasive. I am tempted to despair because the Lutheran sensibility seems variously at risk in its current institutional manifestations and I find it difficult to imagine how things might be turned around. But that, I admonish (and console) myself, is not my business. It is hard enough being faithful without worrying about success. FT

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Opinion

John Brown Redux

Dennis Teti

Pro-life forces are on the defensive because of abortion clinic killings. They stand accused of encouraging violence because of their efforts to outlaw abortion and to discourage women from seeking abortions. The Catholic hierarchy and other pro-life leaders who are in serious doubt about the future of peaceful protest should learn a lesson from the Republican Party's response to John Brown's abolitionist raids in the 1850s. Just as the Republicans then were accused of encouraging lawlessness by speaking out for the natural rights of slaves, so pro-life advocates now are vilified for defending the natural rights of the unborn. And just as Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans then found a way to condemn violence while continuing to demand an end to slavery, so pro-life advocates now must find a way to condemn violence while continuing to demand an end to abortion.

Brown's band of zealots terrorized "bleeding Kansas" and killed five pro-slavery settlers. After illegally running fugitive slaves across the Canadian border they seized the U.S. Armory in Harpers Ferry under a vague scheme to create a secessionist, slave-free Appalachian republic. They killed the mayor and four others before being captured in the shootout that killed twelve more, including two of Brown's sons. A Senate investigating committee found that Brown had stored arms and ammunition to equip 1,500 men, bought with donations from abolitionist sympathizers.

At his trial, Brown rejected advice to plead insanity and claimed to have been acting under "the law of God," adding:

> I believe that to have interfered as I have done . . . in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments—I submit; so let it be done!

Brown and several other terrorists were hanged in 1859 for murder, criminal conspiracy, and treason against Virginia. Abolitionists everywhere such as Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow, and Victor Hugo proclaimed him a saint, martyr, and messiah. To the tune of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," Union soldiers apotheosized Brown whose "body lies a-mould'ring in the grave," but whose "soul goes marching on."

Sectional interests and the national press whipped up memories of earlier slave uprisings in South Carolina and Haiti, charging that Brown had tried to start a black insurrection to murder slave owners and their families. The *New York Herald* ran Republican Senator William Seward's "irrepressible conflict" speech, and claimed that his party was implicated in the Brown raid. Democrats accused presidential candidate Lincoln of contributing money to Brown's cause. Even though the Democrat-dominated Senate investigation (chaired by Jefferson Davis) failed to show a Republican insurrectionary conspiracy, Stephen A. Douglas proposed a criminal sedition law that would in effect have silenced the Republicans.

In speech after speech, Lincoln repudiated Brown's fanatical actions. He equated Harpers Ferry with "the many attempts, related in history, at the assassination of kings and emperors. An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt, which ends in little else than his own execution." In his Cooper Union Address, Lincoln challenged his partisan opponents: if you know of a single Republican who aided John Brown, name him; if you do not, then stop the malicious slander of the Republican Party.

The deeper problem, though, was Republican support for the anti-slavery cause. Millions of Americans, revulsed by the South's "peculiar institution," were voting for a government that would oppose it—or at least its extension into the Western territories. What would it take, Lincoln asked, to satisfy pro-slavery Democrats that Republicans, in opposing slavery, were not encouraging fanatics like John Brown?

> This and this only: cease to call slavery *wrong*, and join them in calling it *right*. And this must be done thoroughly—done in *acts* as well as in *words*. Silence will not be tolerated. Senator Douglas' new sedition law must be enacted and enforced, suppressing all declarations that slavery is wrong, whether made in politics, in presses, in pulpits, or in private. We must arrest and return their fugitive slaves with greedy pleasure. . . . The whole atmosphere must be disinfected from all taint of opposition to slavery, before they will cease to believe that all their troubles proceed from us.

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The "don't care" policy—Lincoln's name for Douglas' "pro-choice" position on slavery—is sophistic, Lincoln argued. Republicans must care; they cannot compromise on the principle that slavery is morally evil. To seek a "middle ground between the right and the wrong [is as] vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man." Denying that the U.S. Supreme Court had the power to impose a pro-slavery policy, he urged recourse to elections as the proper means to reverse the *Dred Scott* decision. (In fact, Lincoln's Republican Congress easily legislated the reversal in 1861.)

Lincoln saw that slavery's proponents were using Brown's extremism as an excuse to stop national protest against the obscenity of slavery and to intimidate his party. Republicans should respond, he suggested, by separating the principle of equal rights from abolitionist violence. Brown's lawlessness was not part of the movement to legislate against slavery; it was closer to the pro-slavery interests' own lawlessness in claiming a power to secede from the Union.

For Lincoln, the U.S. Constitution was the original "Contract With America," supported by a national moral consensus on Thomas Jefferson's statement that all men are created equal in their natural rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. This self-evident truth of the Declaration of Independence is the central proposition of American democracy. Constitutional self-government secures these rights by monopolizing the use of force to uphold law, punish criminals, and defend the nation. Shred the consensus on equal natural rights, and the specter of civil war arises as government licenses some individuals (slave owners or abortionists) to use force to deny the natural rights of others (black slaves or unborn children). The social contract unravels when rights to life and liberty are infringed by private force under color of law. After the *Dred Scott* decision that slaves were property, mass handing over to slave owners the slaves' natural right to liberty, abolitionist and secessionist violence were equally inevitable.

Since the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* surrendered the right to life of fetuses, the same issue has risen again—who is human and therefore possesses natural rights—and the violence has also returned. What pro-abortion forces see as fetal matter under the control of women, pro-life advocates see as unborn human beings entitled to the same natural rights enjoyed by all others. This is not a political issue like taxes or welfare on which half the nation can disagree with the other half. Both positions cannot simultaneously exist in a liberal democracy, because America's *central* problem, according to Lincoln, is to maintain the consensus on who is human in the absence of which the social contract collapses. We should be horrified but not surprised by today's John Browns. Our crisis differs from Lincoln's only in that the slavery question split the nation region by region while abortion divides America home by home.

As Lincoln repudiated John Brown's appeal to bullets in 1859, so should pro-life advocates treat clinic violence. They should condemn all forms of murder while not allowing pro-abortionists to use violence as an excuse to silence principled opposition to the evil of abortion. A year after Harpers Ferry put anti-slavery Republicans on the defensive, Lincoln's party swept into the White House and Congress. Pro-life advocates should take heart at last November's astonishing election victory in which not one pro-life incumbent lost to a pro-abortion challenger and in which the overall pro-life vote increased by about thirty. Like the anti-slavery movement of old, the pro-life cause has growing majority support; its leaders should stop seeing themselves as an embattled minority. They should raise the debate to higher levels by asserting the self-evident truth that all human beings, including the unborn, are created with the natural right to life. Once the moral consensus on that Lincolnian proposition has been restored, a majority of ballots will simply end the abortion policy that has bred so much civil conflict.

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Poverty and the Partisan Press

Michael Novak

It is all very curious. Once it became clear that the Republicans had won power on November 8, 1994, it took only seven days for the serious thinkers in the liberal press to rediscover the issue of poverty. "Scapegoat Time," wrote Bob Herbert of the *New York Times*, while Anna Quindlen evoked the left's favorite image for Republicans with "The Politics of Meanness." "More for the rich, less for the poor," Mark Shields declared a week later.

Yet just a month earlier, when the October poverty statistics revealed quite clearly that the number of poor people had risen to an all-time high under Bill Clinton, the liberal columnists never said a word. When poverty rises under Democrats, it is a non-event. It does not fit the prevailing view of the two parties. To the mainstream press, Democrats are never mean, only compassionate. For the press, "mean," "greedy," and "inequality" are stencils whipped out only when Republicans are in power.

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Those religious people who normally do not specialize in economic statistics depend heavily on the press. They need to be on guard against partisan abuse of numbers. In an earlier column in First Things ("The Rich, the Poor, and Reaganomics" [April 1991]), I predicted that the number of poor people, after declining under Reagan, would rise under Bush despite the latter's "kinder, gentler" rhetoric. It usually surprises people to see what actually happened, because the press, having blamed poverty on Reagan, paid little attention to the problem after he left the scene. What actually happens to the poor is a matter too important to leave to journalists.

At the end of the first year of the Clinton Administration, the Census Bureau's Income and Poverty Report for 1993 found 39.3 million poor persons, the highest number since 1962. There are now 6.9 million more poor persons than in 1989, Reagan's last year. The percentage of the population that is poor is also much higher than in Reagan's last year: 15.1 percent versus 13.1.

Yet Mark Shields, Bob Herbert, Anna Quindlen and their colleagues have seldom expressed a worry about the poor under Democratic administrations, even on those occasions when Democrats presided over a large increase in poverty. For example, the greatest rise in poverty since World War II occurred under a Democrat, Jimmy Carter. Between 1977, when Carter took office, and 1981 when he left it, more than seven million people were added to the poverty rolls, the most ever in a presidential term. Meanwhile, the poor are used by the press as a club to beat Republicans.

In his column, Mark Shields described "the rich" as the top 20 percent in annual income. Yet Mark Shields—and his major newspaper and television colleagues—have incomes in the top 5 percent (above $106,000). Just the same, Mark (a great guy, by the way) and his friends have a way of using the expression "the rich" as if to distance themselves from it. When they say "the rich," they don't mean themselves and they don't even mean exactly "rich," they mean the non-liberal rich.

Moreover, Mark Shields writes about the poor in 1969 and the poor in 1994, twenty-five years later, as if nothing had changed during that period. Yet in the meaning of the term "income" and in the composition of those included in the poorest 20 percent of households great changes actually took place. During that quarter century Great Society programs for the poor increased exponentially. Welfare spending on the poor totalled more than $5.3 trillion and included every sort of noncash income that the new poverty industry could think up (Medicare, Medicaid, housing assistance, food stamps, Head Start, etc.), along with direct cash grants. If the effective income of the poor in 1994 was not far greater than it had been in 1969, a great deal of money was misspent.

Indeed, so much government money has been spent trying to improve the condition of the poor since 1965 that it would actually have been more efficient to mail every one of the poor families, households, and single persons in the United States enough cash to lift all of them above the poverty level every year. The cost—calculated each year as "the poverty deficit"—would today be about $50 billion, a small fraction of the money expended on means-tested programs.

In addition, the composition of the people officially classified as poor has changed dramatically since 1965. Proportionately fewer of the poor today are fathers of families or even single men. Far fewer, too, are in the labor force. The tide of immigration increased, and more of the poor are immigrants "passing through" poverty, soon to be poor no longer. Above all, and sadly, many more are a type of poor person new to America, healthy young people accustomed to staying dependent on welfare year after year.

Between 1967 and 1992, the number of households headed by persons over sixty-five grew by 9.2 million. This is because considerably more people are living to old age than was the case in 1967, and especially because the financial condition of older people has improved so much that nearly all of them now prefer to have households of their own. Most elderly householders have paid-up mortgages, and all benefit enormously from Medicare. Not only are more of them living longer, they are healthier and they look and feel younger than people their age did in the past. Even though many of the elderly are still to be found in the bottom 20 percent of household income, since they are retired and no longer earn income through employment, they are much better protected financially than their predecessors were in 1967. For the elderly, the poverty programs of the last twenty-five years have really worked.

For those under sixty-five, the picture has become far more bleak than it was. Crime rates (especially violent crime) have shot up some 700 percent. Illegitimate births have climbed more than 600 percent. Those of us who were in favor of the poverty programs never predicted such outcomes. On the contrary, our intention was that there would be less crime, less illegitimacy, and stronger families. Poverty programs may not have caused these unintended consequences, but they certainly did not achieve our intentions.

The picture for the bottom 20 percent by income looks like this. There were nearly 19.3 million households in this bottom fifth in 1992 (the last year for which data are available), *and only one in five of these households is headed by a married couple,* while three in five are headed by single females. Contrast this

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with 1960, when nearly two-thirds of households in the bottom fifth were headed by persons who worked. By 1991 the percentage of heads of households in the bottom fifth who worked (even part-time) had fallen to around one-third, and only 11 percent worked full-time throughout the year.

This sea change in household composition during the past twenty-five years explains why the old maxim "A rising tide lifts all boats"—used so effectively by John F. Kennedy in 1962—no longer seems to work. A hidden presupposition of this maxim is that household composition remains fairly uniform at all income levels. This is much less true today than it was twenty-five years earlier. In higher brackets today married-couple families predominate, with their capacity to generate two incomes; only 20 percent of households in the bottom fifth are married-couple households.

Moreover, in the bottom fifth today a majority of heads of households are not only unemployed but not even in the labor force (i.e., not even looking for work). Many are over sixty-five, retired, living on savings, pensions, and social security. Many are husband-absent single females with small children for whom to care. (These are the two most rapidly growing categories in the bottom fifth.)

These are the major reasons the real income of poor people has been declining in recent decades. Even an economic recovery (such as the great boom of the last six Reagan years, as well as the more modest boom that began in 1992) cannot lift incomes for those who are not in the labor force earning income.

The unemployment rate for married men is just over 3 percent (and for married women not much higher), which is why relatively few married-couple families in 1992 had incomes below $16,960, the cut-off point defining the bottom 20 percent. Employment matters. But it is not an option for those who, for various reasons, are not in a position to work full-time—the elderly, single mothers with small children, and others.

The press makes much of the "growing income inequality" between the poor and the nonpoor. But since most "in-kind" government subsidies are not counted in computing income, and since most of those in the bottom fifth are not earning income by employment, it is very hard to see what would raise the incomes of the poor. (Those in the bottom fifth report spending three times more than they report as income, but part of this can be accounted for by the elderly and others drawing on their savings.)

Age profile, marital status, and lack of paid employment are serious factors affecting the income of the bottom 20 percent of the American population. It helps no one to imagine that those in the bottom 20 percent are in the same position with respect to these factors as those with higher incomes. The composition of the bottom 20 percent is sui generis.

A final note. The percentage of the "officially poor" is, as noted, at the highest level in many years, 15.1 percent. Obviously, the "bottom 20 percent" includes a somewhat higher range of incomes. The poverty threshold in 1992 for a nonfarm family of four was $14,335, and lower for smaller families and persons living alone. But the cut-off point for the bottom 20 percent of families was $16,960.

What is behind "statistics"? My father and mother, perhaps like the parents of most readers of this journal, lived into their eighties and had an income that placed them well down in the bottom 20 percent. But they owned their home in Pennsylvania outright, as well as a condominium in Florida (with a small mortgage), and their expenses were few. They would have been astonished to have been counted as poor. My father thought he was rich; my mother marvelled at how much better they were living than they had ever expected to. "Statistics" often give a false impression of uniformity masking the variety of realities they cover.

The good news is that, after having been ignored by the press during the first two years of the Clinton Administration, the poor are in for an explosion of attention from the media now that the Republicans have won the House and the Senate. The bad news is that too much of this attention will be based on false conceptions, and too much of it will be used to score partisan points.

The first moral obligation, as Pascal wrote, is to think clearly.

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The Suicide State

J. P. Kenney

> The Roman Catholic Church called it a sin. The American Medical Association described it as unethical. C. Everett Koop, the former Surgeon General, said it was dangerous to society's health. But Oregonians, enhancing their reputations as Western mavericks, have apparently ignored the advice of outsiders and made their state the first jurisdiction in the world to legalize doctor-assisted suicide.
>
> — *The Oregonian*, November 10, 1994

Election day in Oregon brought the unprecedented acceptance of physician-assisted suicide by voters. This event may represent only an anomalous

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electoral outcome, the result of the special social character and ethical climate of a single state in the American West. But it might also define a critical moment in our culture, a turning point in the nation's understanding of medicine, personal autonomy, and death. My purpose here is not to address the issue substantively, but to reflect on why the interdenominational campaign against physician-assisted suicide failed in Oregon and to consider the future.

The measure itself, number sixteen in a crowded field of ballot initiatives, read:

> *Question*: Shall law allow terminally ill adult patients voluntary informed choice to obtain physician's prescription for drugs to end life?
> *Summary*: Adopts law. Allows terminally ill adult Oregon residents voluntary informed choice to obtain physician's prescription for drugs to end life. Removes criminal penalties for qualifying physician-assisted suicide. Applies when physicians predict patient's death within 6 months. Requires:
> 15-day waiting period;
> 2 oral, 1 written request;
> Second physician's opinion;
> Counseling if either physician believes patient has mental disorder, impaired judgment from depression. Person has choice whether to notify next of kin. Health care providers immune from civil, criminal liability for good faith compliance.
> *Estimate of Financial Impact*: No financial effect on state or local government expenditures or revenue.

Having learned from its earlier, failed attempts in California and Washington, the Hemlock Society, the national leader of the "right-to-die" movement, devised a measure phrased in the language of safeguards, permission, and personal choice. It avoided active physician involvement by selecting suicide pills as the means of death rather than injections. A waiting period, multiple patient requests, a second physician opinion, and certification of mental soundness were all included to reassure voters of the measure's deliberation. Readers should notice the extent to which family members are kept at a distance. Besides a privacy clause, allowing the patient to avoid disclosure of intention, the provisions of the act require that there be one witness to the patient's written request who is neither a relative nor a potential beneficiary. These stipulations were especially important in framing the public debate in Oregon, since voters on previous measures in nearby states had shied at the specter of physicians wielding hypodermic needles at the behest of relations and heirs. But this time in Oregon, the home state of the Hemlock Society, physician-assisted suicide was presented as a matter of personal autonomy, an act of Socratic dignity, the gentle embrace of death.

Opponents of the measure were cast as religious bigots. The "Coalition for Compassionate Care," the umbrella group that fought the measure, was initially organized and funded primarily by Roman Catholics. This was a great stroke of luck for proponents. They were able to introduce their measure as a secular and rational initiative directed against religious coercion. Citizens were invited to take back control of their lives. In its advertising, the campaign informed voters that "there are some people who think they have the divine right to control other people's lives." Oregonians needed little tutoring in discerning who such medieval theocrats were.

Several other facts must be supplied to explain why this strategy succeeded. Besides an aura of rationality, the Hemlock Society had demographics and local culture in its favor. Oregon is one of the "least-churched" states in the nation. About a third of the population is classified as religiously affiliated; only Nevada, where gambling and prostitution are legal, is lower. Roman Catholics make up the largest denomination, but are only 10 percent of the population. The other major groups are the Mormons and evangelical Protestants. Moreover, Oregon has a long-standing tradition of anti-Catholicism, harking back to strong Ku Klux Klan activities earlier in the century, as well as pre-World War II efforts to prevent religious (especially Catholic) schools from operating, a movement that failed only on appeal to the Supreme Court. Within the last few years, anti-papal billboards, with a caricature of John Paul II as the Antichrist, were to be seen at prominent intersections in Portland and in other Northwest locations. The Hemlock Society was thus able to depict itself as a proponent of rational choice, while simultaneously exploiting prejudice against the religious minority in general and Catholics in particular.

Identification of opposition to the measure with Catholicism might have been avoided if other religious groups had been perceived in the public's mind as early and strong opponents. Many were, but their opposition was not well known. While the major interdenominational group, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, did join the Roman Catholic Church in placing its own opposition statement in the official state voter pamphlet, no member denominations did so. About six weeks before the election, Ecumenical Ministries began to campaign actively and to demonstrate that denominational opposition was widespread. Indeed, the religious coalition finally included most Christian denominations, many Orthodox and Conservative Jewish congregations, as well as several Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu groups. While efforts to mobilize opinion may well have been effective within these denominations themselves, the tardy coalescence of a unified front allowed propo-

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nents to marginalize religious opposition. In a state so "unchurched" and secular, this organizational failure proved costly.

The role of evangelical Protestants bears mentioning. The nascent alliance of traditional Catholics and evangelicals never developed publicly in Oregon. This was partly a function of limited organization among evangelical churches. However, as one longtime evangelical leader told me, his community has also felt the continuing effects of cultural and social "intimidation" by the largely liberal and secular Oregon establishment. The recent national media assault on the "religious right" has been a prevailing fixture in Oregon for several years now, particularly in the populous region between Portland and Eugene. And a tacit connection with the "gay rights" debate should also be noted. Oregon has been a major battleground for this issue: a ballot measure sharply restricting homosexual rights lost heavily in 1992; a scaled-down version was defeated by several percentage points in this election. Evangelicals, though not the originators of these measures, have been suspected as being sympathetic, and as a result have come under relentless attack in the mainstream media under the "religious right" rubric. This has led to political caution among Oregon's evangelicals. In the case of the doctor-assisted suicide measure, it produced a slow public reaction within that religious community.

Another factor in the victory for "the right to die" was a striking inability of the opposition, both religious and secular, to secure high-profile support within the cultural and political mainstream, despite strenuous efforts to do so. It is interesting to note the groups formally in support of the measure, and perhaps more important, those that were officially neutral. The political left, as expected, turned out in force: the Democratic Party and the ACLU were in favor. Although the national American Medical Association opposes physician assistance in suicide, the Oregon Medical Association remained neutral, along with the Oregon Hospice Association and the Oregon Pharmacists Association. These local defections from what had been expected to be a united front by the medical mainstream within the state were especially damaging.

A final factor bears mentioning. It is always difficult to characterize clearly the political and cultural character of any state. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that Oregon has a strong, if inchoate, libertarian streak. Church affiliation and libertarianism seem to be inversely proportional in America. Thus the "right to die" campaign was able to represent the issue as a general referendum "on getting government out of this important personal decision," and "on returning control of end of life decisions to where it belongs—with the dying person." Against this libertarian backdrop the measure's proponents could offer genuine and moving testimonials from those whose loved ones had been forced by "the state" to die in protracted agony against their wishes and convictions. This strategy was aided, in highly personal terms, by the outgoing Democratic Governor, Barbara Roberts (whose husband died during her term of office) and by the widow of former Republican Governor Tom McCall (a totemic figure for many Oregonians). Opponents were thus faced with two tasks: to raise the level of debate to a plane of ethics beyond the emotive and the anecdotal, and then to argue against the regnant libertarian ethos. Communitarian ethics comes hard to Oregonians, especially to the rootless souls of the metropolitan areas who share in the Western propensity for frequent moves and scattered, broken families. While the sparsely populated rural counties generally opposed the measure, the more populated counties favored it. In the end it passed narrowly, 51 percent to 49 percent.

As the opening quotation from the *Oregonian* indicates, citizens of the suicide state are now reflecting on their status as "Western mavericks." A prominent Oregon historian averred, "Oregonians have a strong streak of individualism. It's been an element in Oregon character since pioneer days." Similarly, the head of the Oregon Historical Society was quoted as saying, "The fact that there has been no dominant religion has allowed a moral flexibility that a lot of states don't have." He went on to note, "This measure is in keeping with Oregon. Throughout history Oregon seems to be out there ahead of other states in testing things." The bottle bill, another national first, has been mentioned. Already the debate over public funding of physician-assisted suicide for those receiving state-supported medical care has begun.

Strangely enough, all sides are now pointing to the religiously anomalous character of Oregon, and to its consequent "moral flexibility." While this may describe Oregon accurately, there are some grounds for doubting that the state will remain unique. It is doubtless true that the sea of faith never had a high tide along the upper Pacific coast, but the melancholy roar of its receding tide—to use Matthew Arnold's image—has been heard in many other states. Perhaps Oregon will prove to be unusual only because it has had no cultural need to discard a religious heritage. Wherever the tide falls low enough elsewhere, the ethics of the autonomous self may surface and prevail.

That is too large a question to pursue here. But several final, political observations are in order. As this account indicates, there is a critical need for building an interdenominational coalition on this question both at the local and national level. Despite the laudable efforts of Archbishop William Levada, Catholics were left out in the lead too long in Oregon, with disastrous results. Early and highly public interreligious coalitions will be necessary in most

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states. There is reason to believe that these can be formed. The "right to die" has limited support in the ethics of the Western religious traditions. And the issue has not yet become a political litmus test, requiring leaders to revise their tradition's ethics in order to remain in coalition with their allies on the political and cultural left. Unlike abortion, there is no gender-political dimension to be overcome. Denominational leaders should make a concerted effort to press the ethical dimension of the issue, both within their religious communities and in the mainstream culture. A panorthodox coalition encompassing traditional Jews, Christians, and Muslims would be a potent force, difficult to dismiss as merely "the religious right." The ethical case has a fair chance of being seriously heard in most states.

This raises the difficult issue of the broader political ramifications of physician-assisted suicide. Here there is no certain line of demarcation. The Democrats, as the "pro-choice" party, can be expected to favor the practice nationally as they did here in Oregon. One goal for religious opponents of physician-assisted suicide is to keep the Democratic party at all levels neutral. If enough members of what remains of the New Deal coalition, especially Catholics and church-affiliated African Americans, make their ethical views known, there is some chance that neutrality might result. But that is unlikely for a reason as yet politically obscured, although it has emerged on the edge of the Oregon debate and will soon become central in the national discussion: the importance of physician-assisted suicide to homosexuals. The venereal plague of AIDS has made terminal illness a hideous fixture of life among gays. For this understandable and deeply felt reason, there appears to be overwhelming support for "death with dignity" among homosexuals. Because of their increased importance to the diminished Democratic party, homosexuals will put strong pressure on the national party and on liberal religious denominations.

The Republican Party, while nominally "pro-life," may not prove as reliable on this issue as it has been on abortion. It is well to remember that the GOP is a "qualified pro-life" party: anti-abortion but pro-capital punishment. The latter is particularly significant, since arguments regarding divine sovereignty and the taking of life may prove awkward for many Republicans. Although formally distinct, capital punishment and physician-assisted suicide are closely related in their ethical contours. Unlike abortion, both turn on the legal conditions under which the life of an adult citizen may be terminated. Admittedly, political dynamics may have more significance than ethical argumentation, but even here there is reason for concern. There is a long-standing libertarian tradition throughout the Republican Party in the mountain West, similar to that found in Oregon, and this region's attitude could well coalesce with the party's emergent Eastern wing. The latter, the faction represented by Governors William Weld of Massachusetts and Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey, is socially libertarian, pro-choice, and fiscally conservative. They might very well choose to make support for doctor-assisted suicide a defining social issue. While it is unlikely that this faction could prevail in that struggle, Republican neutrality on the national level cannot be ruled out. Once again, a panorthodox coalition is needed to press the case.

A further point follows for the pro-life cause within the Republican Party. As readers of these pages are well aware, the GOP is under pressure to ease its platform plank favoring a constitutional amendment banning most abortions. The pressure has come not just from libertarians, but also from some *pro-life* supporters who seek limitations on abortion as first steps toward its elimination. Those who favor this course might consider forging some political link between the two issues. Modifications in the anti-abortion platform might be conceded in exchange for opposition to physician-assisted suicide. This is a bargain that the GOP's libertarians might accept, softening the party's language on the more exigent abortion issue while fixing its stance on an issue as yet politically under-defined.

This leaves the question of political venue: where should this political battle be carried out? Piecemeal in the states, or at the federal level? And what about possible legal strategies? Implementation of Measure 16 is at present on hold, pending an appeal in the federal courts. While this route might prove successful in banning the practice, it might also allow the solonic judiciary to discover in the Constitution a right to "death with dignity." There will need to be some immediate strategic reflection within the pro-life movement on these questions, along with some hard assessment of previous failures. It may indeed be the case that physician-assisted suicide could in the short run be confined to a few Western states. But a chain reaction from the libertarian West to the liberal East cannot be ruled out over the next decade. On the other hand, a federally focused political strategy would raise the stakes enormously. A constitutional amendment to ban the practice seems at present improbable.

These are some of the issues that the "moral flexibility" of Oregonians has brought into the world. Unlike the Netherlands, where the practice has only been tolerated, doctors in Oregon may soon begin to help their patients kill themselves with full legal support. If a further, vertiginous decline in the nation's public morality is to be averted, we must insure that Oregonians remain the mavericks they take such pride in being.

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ON THE OTHER HAND

The Vernacularist Illusion

Peter L. Berger

In recent decades, both among Roman Catholics and Protestants, there has been much talk about liturgical reform and a great amount of activity resulting from this talk. Some people have even described these developments as a liturgical revolution.

There have been different theological and pastoral rationales given for the changes in worship, and, of course, some changes have been more radical than others. But there is one central assumption that underlies most of the changes—namely, that the traditional, pre-reform modes of worship were too remote from the lives of ordinary people and that the language of worship had become incomprehensible. Much of the liturgical reform of recent decades was consequently a great turn toward the vernacular. To be sure, there have been other motives, notably those that have animated the promoters of so-called "inclusive language," which is a political project designed to change the content rather than the comprehensibility of liturgical language. In a wider sense, however, this project too is related to the vernacular urge, for that political project is relevant to the lives of ordinary people.

Undoubtedly the most dramatic moment in this recent history came when the Roman Catholic Church, virtually overnight, replaced the Latin mass with a polyphony of vernacular languages. Protestant churches, which had eliminated Latin four hundred years earlier, could not now match this dramatic gesture. But in their own little ways they went through similar motions. Both the language of the Scriptures and that of congregational worship were subjected to translations that were supposed to make the message and the proceedings more understandable to the people in the pews as well as more relevant to their lives. In Protestantism, too, there has been a turn to the vernacular. But closest in drama to the Roman *aggiornamento* (an apt phrase indeed in this context) has been the radical revision of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, translating the solemn Elizabethan cadences of that great monument of the English language into the antiseptic prose of, say, the British Broadcasting Corporation.

There has been some overt resistance to these moves. Conservative Catholics travel long distances to a parish where, almost furtively, a Latin mass is still celebrated. Traditionalist Episcopalians gather in a dissident congregation for the old service, carefully leafing through the worn-out pages of ancient prayer books no longer printed by the denominational presses. There have even been some rather feeble schisms, reminiscent of the rebellious Old Believers in Russian Orthodoxy. But very few protests came from the ecclesiastical intellectuals, most of whom endorsed the vernacular revolution with varying degrees of enthusiasm. As to the ordinary people in the pews, when they were asked (which, and then only rarely, was typically by pollsters rather than church officials), they said in large numbers that they disliked the changes. Very few of them organized in any serious way to resist. Many of them voted with their feet, quietly slipping away from the liturgies that had been updated for their benefit.

As a sociologist of religion I was already struck at the time of the Second Vatican Council by the fact that there was little if any empirical evidence to indicate that ordinary Catholics found the Latin mass remote or difficult to understand (especially with English missals in hand). The remoteness and the incomprehensibility were posited a priori by theologians and prelates. The same lack of evidence pertains to all the other programs of vernacularization. I'm not aware of any studies showing that ordinary people in England or in the United States had problems with the language of the old Book of Common Prayer. Conversely, there is at least some empirical evidence to the effect that many faithful Catholics and other Christians have been put off by the liturgical innovations of the recent past, some so seriously as to become alienated from their church. There is some exquisite irony in this. But there is another, massive movement in contemporary Christianity that sheds unexpected light on the rationale of the vernacular movement: the worldwide ascendancy of Pentecostalism.

The rapid growth of Pentecostalism in the United States is a well-known fact. It has also become clear that this phenomenon is international in scope. It is spreading in South Korea, all the Overseas Chinese communities, apparently within China itself, in the Philippines, in the South Pacific, and in sub-Saharan Africa (where it has also entered into syntheses with traditional African religions). Most dramatically, it is spreading like a prairie fire throughout Latin America, where there are now an estimated forty to fifty million Protestants, some 80 percent of them Pentecostals. Most recently, there is some evidence that Pentecostalism is making inroads in Eastern Europe. And Pentecostal forms of worship and piety have been spreading within non-Pentecostal churches, both Protestant and Catholic (as manifested in the

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so-called Charismatic movement). Given the massiveness of this phenomenon, it is very unlikely that any single factor can explain its remarkable success. But it is noteworthy that there is one universal and indeed defining characteristic of Pentecostal Christianity—its language of worship.

Pentecostals are Christians whose worship is dominated by glossolalia, the "speaking in tongues." Pentecostals, of course, explain this practice by the presence of the Holy Spirit, who, as at the original Pentecost reported in the Acts of the Apostles, descends upon the faithful and allows them to speak in alien tongues. This is not the place to dispute this explanation theologically. I only want to make here one simple, empirical observation. The fastest-growing Christian community in the contemporary world, and one that consists overwhelmingly of very ordinary people, worships by way of glossolalia—that is, in a language much more remote from the vernacular than Latin, Elizabethan English, or any other archaic language (including church Slavonic).

This observation is hardly conclusive, but it suggests what may well be the underlying mistake of the vernacularist assumption. It is, to be sure, not the only mistake. There is also the patronizing notion that ordinary people are unable to find their way through proceedings in an unfamiliar idiom—a notion, as noted before, that is almost certainly mistaken when it comes to liturgical language. But there is a more fundamental error in the notion that worship must minimize the remoteness of God as much as possible. To be sure, the error is not total. Of course any form of worship will seek to mediate between the remoteness of the supernatural and the reality of everyday human existence. Of course the Bible, if it is to be read by ordinary people, must be translated into a language that they can understand (far be it from me to disapprove of Luther's great achievement in this matter). And of course it makes no sense for a preacher addressing, say, a German congregation to speak in Greek. Thus there must be a place for the vernacular in Christian worship. But vernacularism, as it has come to be widely established in the churches, may well be described as a subtle and yet very damaging heresy. It is fundamentally misguided to use linguistic means to deny the transcendent remoteness altogether, to pretend that we can speak of God as we speak of politics or commerce, to try to conceal the divine otherness. The Pentecostals, lustily uttering their incomprehensible and untranslatable glossolalia, offer a welcome corrective.

A few months ago I was in London on a Sunday morning. I made my way to the local Anglican church, a rather ornate edifice not far from the financial district. The church was almost empty (not an unusual condition in today's Church of England). The congregation consisted of some thirty people, mostly old ladies, each one sitting by herself. I was probably the youngest person in the place, except for five teenage boys who constituted the choir and who looked like parolees from a home for juvenile delinquents. An old man waddled toward the organ, to be followed by an even older man who turned out to be the vicar. It was a thoroughly depressing gathering and I wondered whether I would not have been better advised to stay in my hotel room and, in good Protestant fashion, use the thoughtfully provided Gideon Bible for my private devotions. But then the service began, using, I happily noted, the unexpurgated text of the Book of Common Prayer. The mighty language, even as spoken by this rather uninspiring priest, suddenly seemed to fill the building. The empirical reality of what was evidently a moribund congregation fell away, to be replaced by something gloriously *other*:

> Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men: We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ: for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. . . .

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The Ultimately Liberal Condition

Roger Lundin

"Things are in the saddle and ride mankind," complained Ralph Waldo Emerson a century and a half ago. Like his disciple and Concord neighbor Henry David Thoreau, Emerson was vexed by the ironies of modern history. Technologies of the kind that had ushered in the industrial revolution were intended to free the men and women of the modern world—from poverty, from bondage to servile labor, and from subjection to the vagaries of nature. But instead, Emerson, Thoreau, and others feared, technology had brought bondage of a new kind.

To Emerson and Thoreau, technology mastered its users in several ways, not least significantly through its capacity to fascinate people with means rather than ends. Long before Albert Einstein made his pithy remark about the modern age being an era of perfected means and confused ends, Emerson and Thoreau had identified the problem. "We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas," Thoreau observed, "but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate. . . . We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic . . . ; but perchance the first news that will leak through the broad, flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough." If Thoreau had such misgivings about the telegraph, what would he have thought about trucking down the information superhighway or about channel-surfing his way through the five hundred stations beamed down from the heavens to his cabin on the banks of Walden Pond?

Thoreau's fears received disturbing confirmation in a work written by one of his contemporaries, Frederick Douglass. In his autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave,* Douglass wrote of the irony that even in the ultimate relationship of user and tool—that of master and slave—the master became mastered, the user used. Douglass was at one point transferred from a plantation to serve a family in Baltimore. His new mistress, Mrs. Auld, "had never had a slave under control previously" but "had been dependent upon her own industry for a living." Douglass "scarcely knew how to behave towards her," because her kindness and respectful attitude towards him made her "entirely unlike any other white woman" he had ever known.

But all that quickly changed, once what Douglass calls "the fatal poison of irresponsible power" came into Mrs. Auld's hands. "Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. . . . Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tigerlike fierceness." Having made black men and women into things in order to master them, white slaveholders found themselves, according to Douglass, dominated and degraded by the very system they had set in place to serve as an instrument of their will.

Matters were not supposed to be like this, and Emerson, Thoreau, and others were determined to set them right. They argued against slavery in the concrete and sought more general remedies for the human spirit in the abstract. To reassert the superiority of spirit over matter, of the human will over the tools it uses—to put mankind back in the saddle, that is—the American romantics elaborated their doctrines of the innocent, infinite, and divine self. What makes the sadness of Emerson and Thoreau both ironic and especially pertinent to us is the clear line of descent running from these apostles of romanticism to the contemporary purveyors of postmodernism. Emerson, Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller paved the way for the likes of Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish. Like the nineteenth-century transcendentalists, the late-twentieth-century American postmodernists focus upon the self and the powers of language, and share with their romantic forebears an

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essentially optimistic understanding of human nature and a breezily upbeat view of the human condition.

The Concord romantics and postmodern pragmatists differ dramatically, however, in their estimation of the ultimate significance of that condition. To an Emerson or Thoreau, the innocent, infinite American self was still an actor in a great spiritual drama. When Emerson wrote that the "ancient precept 'Know thyself' and 'Study nature' become at last one maxim," he was articulating a deeply felt conviction that the law of God permeates both the self and the natural world. The romantics believed that when language was employed intuitively and creatively, it could unlock the mysteries secreted away within nature and the self. "The world being thus put under the mind for verb and noun, the poet is he who can articulate it," asserted Emerson in "The Poet." "We are symbols and inhabit symbols," he explained in that essay. But in Emerson's words, because we are "infatuated with the economical use of things," we cannot hear the symbols speak to us. Nevertheless, "the poet, by an ulterior intellectual perception, gives them a power which makes their old use forgotten, and puts eyes, and a tongue, into every dumb and inanimate object."

In American postmodernism, the ethical and metaphysical foundations of romanticism simply drop away, leaving the self to be driven by the single engine of desire. Postmodernism in America is romanticism stripped of its pretensions. Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud materialized and demystified the transcendent self celebrated in the Enlightenment and romanticism. In light of what Paul Ricoeur calls the "hermeneutics of suspicion," it is hard to claim for the unaided, unimpeded self direct access to God or the eternal truth of things. All that language can reveal, the postmodern argument concludes from its loss of romantic faith, are the self's desires—for sexual gratification, economic gain, pleasure, and the will to power. "All preferences are principled," writes Stanley Fish, a central figure in literary and legal postmodernism, and "all principles are preferences. . . . In short, one person's principles are another person's illegitimate ('mere') preferences."

What Fish and Rorty say in the works they have published over the last two decades should give pause to anyone who believes that Christians should employ the vocabulary of postmodern pragmatism to articulate their faith and to attract others to it. As Rorty, Fish, and others consistently make clear, the language of postmodernism is anything but a morally neutral tool that people of any persuasion might pick up and use to some anointed or appointed end. Instead, that vocabulary commits its user to a very specific vision of the self, truth, and the ethical life—a vision fundamentally at odds with the most basic affirmations of the Christian creeds.

As Fish puts it, the vocabulary of postmodernity is committed to promoting a vision of humans as the species *homo rhetoricus* rather then *homo seriosus*. To define *homo rhetoricus*, Fish quotes Richard Lanham, a theorist of rhetoric: "[*Homo rhetoricus*] assumes a natural agility in changing orientations. . . . From birth, almost, he has dwelt not in a single-value structure but in several. He is thus committed to no single construction of the world. . . . He accepts the present paradigm and explores its resources. Rhetorical man is trained not to discover reality but to manipulate it. Reality is what is accepted as reality, what is useful.'"

As Fish portrays him, "rhetorical man" would seem to have almost godlike powers as he stands back from reality surveying the scene and weighing his options. From the materials available to him in the history of culture, he selects those that will be useful. In Fish's words, "he manipulates or fabricates himself, simultaneously conceiving of and occupying the roles that become first possible and then mandatory given the social structure his rhetoric has put in place." Perhaps the most important thing to understand about *homo rhetoricus* is that "by exploring the available means of persuasion in a particular situation, he tries them on, and as they begin to suit him, he becomes them."

"As they begin to suit him, he becomes them"—that is the key admission. For a Christian professing a gospel of truth beyond contingency or a divine imperative beyond the desires of the moment, the rhetoric of postmodern pragmatism creates a moral universe in which the self that would use language to "help get us what we want" (Rorty) discovers itself brought into bondage by the very tool it sought to master. And though this mastery extends even to those who employ such a vocabulary for unabashedly postmodern ends, my argument here has to do with the devastating irony that confronts any who would appropriate this vocabulary in order to further the cause of Christian scholarship and witness in the contemporary world.

Those who adopt the language of postmodern pragmatism as a useful technique for apologetics are likely to arrive at an updated version of Emerson's conclusion: "Words are now in the saddle and ride mankind." Christian apologists may dream of harnessing this vocabulary in aid of corraling the wandering herds of the MTV generation and leading them to the church, or they may embrace that vocabulary in hopes of coaxing postmodern intellectuals back to the faith; but if they dream of such possibilities, inevitably it will be only a matter a time before they awaken to discover that they themselves have become beasts of burden, consigned to carrying the postmodern cargo to market.

To be sure, melancholy of the kind I have just evoked does not issue from many contemporary

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American postmodernists. Rather than bewailing the tragic ironies of human efforts to master our destiny, they laud the newly discovered powers of the postmodern self and its linguistic tools. Rorty, for instance, depicts that self as a dynamic, creative agent wielding words to get what it wants, striving to "transform things until they mirror his power." He argues that our present vantage point allows us to see how contemporary pragmatism originates in the battle between science and literature that began with the romantics. He acknowledges that the romantic movement was at first an effort to salvage the spiritual legacy of Christian faith by planting the source of that faith within the self. The romantics fully believed that the virtuous powers of the self corresponded to the virtue and power of God. William Butler Yeats, who spoke of himself as the "last romantic," succinctly expressed this romantic faith:

> All hatred driven hence,
> The soul recovers radical innocence
> And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
> Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
> And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will.

Rorty argues that the logic of romanticism eventually drove its heirs to abandon their metaphysical pretensions. It is now understood that the true meaning of "romanticism" is "the thesis that the one thing needful [is] to discover not which propositions are true but rather what vocabulary we should use." The romantics, of course, did not know that this was what they meant. "Reason cunningly employed Hegel, contrary to his own intentions," writes Rorty, "to write the charter of our modern literary culture." It turned Hegel's "historical sense of the relativity of principles and vocabularies to a place and time" into a "romantic sense that everything can be changed by talking in new terms." The literary culture to which Hegel gave birth is one "which claims to have taken over and reshaped whatever is worth keeping in science, philosophy, and religion—looking down on all three from a higher standpoint." Needless to say, Rorty applauds this transformation of romanticism by pragmatism. In arguing, as Rorty does, that "anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed," contemporary pragmatists assume that the creative, willing self has the power to acquire or accomplish what it wishes.

In a sense, this self can even cheat death of its power. Rorty lauds the Nietzschean self, which "would seek consolation, at the moment of death, . . . in being that peculiar sort of dying animal who, by describing himself in his own terms, had created himself." Thus, the most deft pragmatists will be able, by using language as a kind of giant crowbar, to roll away the stone of our inherited contingencies—even the most weighty ones of sin and death.

When viewed in one way, the conclusions that Rorty and others draw seem like the latest development in a philosophical narrative stretching back for centuries. Looked at in another light, however, the postmodern pragmatists might seem to be little more than apologists for the "therapeutic" society. In speaking of the therapeutic here, I am referring to what Philip Rieff, author of *The Therapeutic Society*, has described as "the unreligion of the age, and its master science." According to Rieff, in a therapeutic understanding of the world there is "nothing at stake beyond a manipulatable sense of well-being." A therapeutic culture is one in which questions of ultimate concern—about the nature of the good, the meaning of truth, and the existence of God—are taken to be unanswerable and hence, in some fundamental sense, insignificant.

According to Rieff, few things suit the therapeutic ideal better than the "prevalent American piety toward the self. This self, improved, is the ultimate concern of modern culture." In one of the central texts of the postmodern movement, Jean François Lyotard defines the movement as "simplifying to the extreme, . . . incredulity towards metanarratives." The postmodern self, then, seeks to be liberated from the imprisoning confinement of the historical or communal narratives that make a claim upon it. In other words, the therapeutic self considers itself free of the obligations of truth and the claims of ethical ideals.

Therein lies the danger of appropriating the vocabulary of postmodernism for the articulation of Christian truth in the contemporary world. The language of postmodern pragmatics can imagine no goal for human striving beyond that of Rieff's "manipulatable sense of well-being." To appropriate its images is to accept its vision of life as a process with no goal beyond that of perpetuating the process itself and making it as pleasurable as possible. "There is no need to envision a point or a goal outside of practice because practice is at every moment organized in relation to goals already known," says Stanley Fish. Thus does postmodern pragmatism make one merely a tool of its vision of the world. Or, to borrow Shakespeare's image, the Christian who adopts postmodern language is likely to find himself "hoist with his own petard."

It is Hamlet who uses that image, in alluding to the trick he has played upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. These two have been enlisted by Hamlet's uncle, King Claudius, to escort the Prince to England, where he is to be killed according to instructions that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern carry with them. While they are at sea, Hamlet steals the instructions and replaces them with a directive that demands that the English immediately put to death the two bearers.

It is especially interesting that it should be Hamlet who speaks the words because earlier in the same

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play he says something to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that might easily lead one to assume him to be an originator of the postmodern pragmatic viewpoint. When the courtiers question Hamlet's designation of Denmark as a prison—"We think not so, my lord"—he responds by saying, "Why, then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison."

Yet there is a vast difference between Hamlet's observation that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" and Richard Rorty's assertion that "anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed." And in that distinction we can see the difference between a Christian apologetic that engages postmodernity seriously but critically and one that capitulates to it by appropriating its vocabulary and assumptions.

Hamlet's claim about the power of thought acknowledges the constitutive role of the human mind without claiming that the mind creates the world about which it thinks. As he agonizes over the consequences of the vengeance he has been called upon to exact on behalf of his murdered father, he is paralyzed rather than liberated by his thoughts, which repeatedly direct him to the tragic ironies of the human condition.

The key insight of tragedy—which it shares with a Christian conception of sin—is that we never span the chasm yawning between our intentions and our actions, between our actual behavior and the ideals we profess. Yet for Rorty "redescription" can do the job: "A human life [is] triumphant just insofar as it escapes from inherited descriptions of the contingencies of its existence and finds new descriptions. This is the difference between the will to truth and the will to self-overcoming. It is the difference between thinking of redemption as making contact with something larger and more enduring than oneself and redemption as Nietzsche describes it: 'recreating all "it was" into a "thus I willed it."'"

Unlike the postmodern pragmatists, Hamlet understands the tragic and ironic limitations of this newly discovered way of thinking about thinking. "To be or not to be—that is the question," he asserts in the play's most famous speech. Yet by the end of that speech, Hamlet is so stymied by his weighing of options and consequences that he laments:

> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pitch and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action. (III, i, 83-88)

As *Hamlet* draws to its tragic conclusion, Hamlet confides to Horatio what he has learned about the limits of calculation and redescription:

> let us know,
> Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
> When our deep plots do pall, and that should teach us
> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will—(V, ii, 8-11)

What is ultimately at stake in the debate over the vocabulary of postmodernism is our vision of truth and moral order. The postmodern vocabulary, as we have seen, assumes a naturalistic view of the created order and a merely preferential basis for the ethical life. To appropriate its language is to trivialize Christian conceptions of sin and forgiveness, guilt and grace, death and resurrection. By holding out the promise of temporal renewal through the power of radical redescription, it denies the transforming power of the word and closes the door to the eternity to which the entire drama of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ points the way.

Two illustrations may clarify what is at stake here. The first has to do with an essay question on a test I gave about ten years ago. It asked students to describe the consequences of the fall as John Milton depicts them in Book IX of *Paradise Lost*. Most answers focused upon the discord that entered Adam and Eve's relationship, their shame, and their drastically altered view of God. But several exams contained surprising responses. Each began with a thesis statement something like this: "The major effect of the fall was to make Adam and Eve change their lifestyle."

What has concerned me over the years has been the inability of many students, when I have related this story to them, to understand the dangers inherent in reducing the expulsion from Eden to a change in lifestyle. A world in which every action manifests nothing more than an individual's flair, his or her peculiar "style," is a world in which there is no difference in choosing between gods to worship and ice-cream flavors to consume.

The second illustration concerns the *New York Times*, which in early 1994 reported that the New York chapter of NARAL was mounting a public service ad campaign to counter the highly publicized De Moss foundation ads that carry the theme, "Life. What a Beautiful Choice." The NARAL ads turn matters around completely: "Choice. What a Beautiful Life." The *Times* story reports: "The spot centers on personal preferences in areas like food, religion, and hair styles, then segues into the issue of 'Whether you have a baby—or an abortion.'" Chinese food or French cuisine, Jesus or Nostradamus, permed or straight, life or death: they are all the same. Whatever tool you choose to use to enhance your own well-being does not matter; only your freedom in choosing does.

The ironic complexities of these issues were brought home to me again a few months later

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when I read a *Newsweek* account of plans for a film version of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter.* Most people are familiar with the climactic scene in that novel, in which Hester Prynne urges Arthur Dimmesdale to flee with her and throw off the burdensome beliefs that afflict the two of them and weigh them down. When Arthur tells Hester of the agony of his sin—because of the tragic and ironic "contrast between what I seem and what I am!"—she replies, "Your sin is left behind you, in the days long past." Hester urges the father of her child to "leave it all behind. . . . Meddle no more with it! Begin all anew!" She begs him to toss down this sin-stained and wearying identity of his and to "exchange this false life of thine for a true one. . . . Preach! Write! Act! Do anything, save to lie down and die!"

In this scene Hester is a forerunner of the postmodern Richard Rorty, for like him she believes that moral quandaries are not resolved by repentance, but by relocation or redescription. Not much distance separates the romantic who believes that "seven years' weight of misery" can readily be exchanged for a future "full of trial and success" from the pragmatic postmodernist who writes that "all any ironist can measure success against is the past—not by living up to it, but by redescribing it in his terms, thereby becoming able to say, 'Thus I willed it.' "

Arthur Dimmesdale is beguiled by Hester's pleas, yet he finds comfort and strength in the same theological system that Hester would have him abandon. Puritan covenantal theology crushes him with the guilt it induces, but it also supports him with the consolation and meaning it imparts to his life. Furthermore, Dimmesdale discovers that without the constricting framework of his beliefs, his moral life turns into a confusing array of destructive impulses.

Hawthorne remained doubtful about the possibility of forgiveness and convinced of the destructive force of unfettered liberty. So, shortly after Arthur's forest encounter with Hester, Hawthorne has Minister Dimmesdale offer an ambiguous public confession of his sin before dying in his lover's arms. Tragic ironies and ambiguities abound at the novel's end.

That is not to be the case with the upcoming movie. *Newsweek* reports that the director has said that "he wants the audience to understand [Dimmesdale's confession and death] as just a metaphor for Dimmesdale's liberation, an interpretation that allows the movie to end on the less depressing note of Dimmesdale and Hester riding off together to start a new life. 'As they reach the edge of the forest,' according to a version of the script obtained by *Newsweek*, 'Hester . . . unfastens the scarlet letter, letting it fall by the wayside. The rear wheel of the wagon rolls over it, partly burying it in the mud.' "

Contemporary American pragmatism—whether it manifests itself in the highest elite reaches of postmodern theory, in the recent attempts of a Presbyterian task force to redescribe fornication and adultery as possible displays of "justice love," or in the slick productions that cascade down upon us daily from Madison Avenue—is market driven. In a passage that all who believe that market research holds the key to the church's future ought to cut out and plaster on their refrigerator doors, Jerry Adler writes in the *Newsweek* story, "A century and a half ago, in the years before audience research, Hawthorne had composed his somber psychological drama with no way to know if readers might prefer a French and Indian War bodice-ripper instead. With nothing at stake but his own immortality, he could make his book as downbeat as he liked, but director Roland Joffe isn't about to take that chance with a $40 million movie."

In the moral universe of this new film script, Hester and Arthur's wagon wheel rolls over much more than a discarded letter. It also buries and leaves behind the two of them any possibility of their assuming a satisfying role in a vast cosmic drama in which their sins might be forgiven and their mortal bodies raised to eternal life. "The abdication of belief makes the behavior small," wrote Emily Dickinson in a poem about the loss of faith in God's sovereignty. Postmodern pragmatism holds out the promise of boundless liberty; it creates a world so profoundly trivial that it starves and stifles the spirit.

More than half a century ago, W. H. Auden imagined the contours of a postmodern moral universe, one that to him represented "the ultimately liberal condition." It is a world filled "with promiscuous pastures where the minotaur of authority is just a roly-poly ruminant and nothing is at stake." In this world, "liberty stands with her hands behind her back, not caring, not minding *anything.*" Finally, Auden writes, "your existence is indeed free at last to choose its own meaning, that is, to plunge headlong into despair and fall through silence fathomless and dry. . . ."

All this is not to be taken as a call for Christians to abandon engagement with the postmodern world or to shun the study of its thought. Before responding to the pragmatism of postmodernity, Christians must understand it as fully and fairly as possible. But such understanding involves more than the reading of essays and books by Rorty and Fish. It also involves situating American postmodernism within the history of American culture, its thought and social practices. Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, and William James are every bit as important for understanding postmodernity as are the latest theoretical treatises emanating from Berkeley, Durham, and all points in between.

In the matter of encountering the postmodern world, as in so many other ways, Dietrich Bonhoeffer provides provocative guidance. "During the last year or so," he wrote to Eberhard Bethge in July of 1944, "I've come to know and understand more and more

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the profound this-worldliness of Christianity." But, he says, "I don't mean the shallow and banal this-worldliness of the enlightened, the busy, the comfortable, or the lascivious, but the profound this-worldliness characterized by discipline and the constant knowledge of death and resurrection." This means, for us in a postmodern world, "living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities." It means sharing the "sufferings of God in the world—watching with Christ in Gethsemane."

This is the point at which Christian apologetic efforts might well begin. With cunning, passion, sincerity, and perseverance, Christians may bring to postmodern culture good news that completely inverts the categories of that culture. To an age that believes that freedom makes you true, Christians respond with a more ancient message, "You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free." FT

Remembering the Titanic Every April 15

for Sultana Harreck, a survivor

Remember us, the voices sang.
The life-rafts drifted. *Nearer My God*
to Thee. The big ship tilted
and was gone.

Whatever Sultana saw
remained in her heart.
She never cursed the ice
or the cracked hull
that blessed her immigration.

For years disc jockeys phoned
to ease their tense listeners
through the big tax deadline.
The happy coincidence was
no happy anniversary.
She accepted their wishes
but never tossed confetti.

For years she sat, confined, a witness
at the living-room, plate-glass window
in the wheelchair that did not roll far.
Her babies grew old, and one died stung.
A bee sting, Mother Harreck cried.

Perhaps there'd been no bee, no sting,
but a child's deep pain carried too long,
the edge growing sharper in secret until at last

other voices, older, cutting into darkest oceans called,
Remember the ice and remember us who drift
a while, then watch hard and long
at our plate-glass windows, waiting
for we all know what.

Leo Luke Marcello

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Dying Like a Dog

Nancy Harvey

Hunger and thirst, starvation and dehydration—ugly words to most of us, bringing images of tormenting weakness, agonizing muscle spasms, the ultimate cannibalism as the body devours itself to stay alive. But not everyone views such words with disgust. Last May, St. Louis University, a private Catholic school, held a conference on medical ethics that included a workshop entitled, "Dying of Dehydration—Does it Hurt?" Last April, some contributors to the symposium in First Things on medical ethics, "The Sanctity of Life Seduced," recommended starvation and dehydration for certain terminal patients and those in a "persistent vegetative state" (PVS). Living wills list artificially administered food and water as things that may be taken away, and newspaper and magazine articles continue to suggest that modern technologies for continuing food and water cause the terminally ill to suffer long and agonizing "bad deaths," or (if they are in PVS), "bad lives" without human capacities.

The people who recommend starvation and dehydration are not monsters or throwbacks to the Third Reich. They seem to be genuinely concerned with the pain and ugliness of "bad death," and some of them are worried that the horrors of technological death increase grassroots support for the euthanasia movement. Those who favor removing food and water have impressive credentials. They include lawyers, doctors, and medical ethicists. However, I wonder how many of them have experienced dehydration and starvation almost to the point of death; how many of them have spent time in the sick bed?

I am a patient—not terminal or in PVS, but very expensive to keep alive, and more and more aware, as I grow older, of what it means to regard food and water as options instead of necessities. I have had scurvy, liver damage, compression fractures, staph infections, seizures, kidney failure, and many episodes of severe dehydration and malnutrition (one almost fatal). Having had surgery for Chrohn's disease, I am kept alive by very expensive hydration and nutrition that goes directly into the bloodstream. Poor health has been a part of my life for twenty-three years.

During this time, I have not noticed that my doctors are afflicted with the hubris that regards death as an accident that can be prevented. Perhaps because they work with chronic disease, my doctors tend to have a very fatalistic attitude. They know they cannot overcome death. All they can do is buy time—and few of them want to buy time for a dying patient in great pain.

Yet ordinary people seem to have gotten the impression that this is exactly what doctors most want to do. Ordinary people seem haunted by the nightmare of the technological "bad death." An old woman full of cancer has her heart stop. Instantly the medics rush in with the paddles to start her up again. A respirator is hooked up. Her gut shut down a couple of days ago, so she already has a central line. Her kidneys quit yesterday, and she is now on dialysis. The medics shock her heart back into action, make sure the beat is regular, check all systems, and leave, after hooking her up to a heart monitor. But late that night the nurses are called away from their stations to tend to others. There is no one watching the monitor. The woman's heart stops—this time forever.

Such a death would certainly be an example of technological hubris, but no one should believe that this is routine care for elderly patients with terminal conditions. The extreme, high-tech procedures imagined by ordinary people are rarely the subject of debate; it is simple feeding tubes and common antibiotics that are labeled "unnatural" by "ethicists"—in the thought that the life which they sustain is also

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unnatural and should not be continued. Feeding tubes are artificial and unnatural, of course, although they are low-tech and simple to use. They are necessary only for a person who cannot swallow. In most cases, spoon-feeding can be, and used to be, done instead, though it is more expensive. Spoon-feeding must be done by hand and spoon-fed diets have to taste good. It is unfair to blame feeding tubes for keeping people alive when many patients (including even some in PVS) could be nourished by other methods. This does not change the fact that feeding tubes are unnatural. But the nature of man is to live in an unnatural environment. There are many people in our society who are kept alive by unnatural technology. There are many people with mild chronic diseases or physical handicaps who are not robust enough to live without electricity, running water, air-conditioning, cars, microwaves, and telephones. Placed in the natural environment of a third world country, they would soon die—unless, of course, someone was willing to care for them. But is such care "natural"? Is it natural for a person or family or society to assume the burdensome care of an adult who will never get better? Is it more natural to help a crippled adult limp to the toilet than to diaper and wash an incontinent adult? Is spoon-feeding a paralyzed man who can only open his mouth and swallow more natural than tube-feeding a paralyzed man who can turn his head and smile?

Perhaps we should ask a different question. Perhaps we should ask, "Is it natural or unnatural for man to use technology to increase his physical comfort?"

Having spent a fair amount of time dehydrated and malnourished, I can confidently say that hydration is far more pleasant than the opposite. Anyone who doubts this can forgo fluids for a few days or nourishment for a few weeks and experience the reality. And after my experiences with staph infections, I would want antibiotics even if I were dying of cancer.

Of course, there is an art to the practice of medicine, part of which involves looking at the patient as well as the chart, and knowing what will help and what will hurt the whole person. There may be times when antibiotics cannot be given, perhaps because the side effects are worse than the staph or because the kidneys or liver cannot take the strain. There may be times when a cancerous mass or fluid retention causes tube feeding to be painful. And there comes a time when the gut and kidneys shut down. The body cannot use food and water after that point, and death is very close. But I cannot understand taking away food and fluid before the body itself decides to quit.

Although food, water, and antibiotics add greatly to a patient's comfort, there are still people who fear a technological "bad death." They have, I think, two reasons for their fear. Hospital deaths with IVs and feeding tubes are the only deaths they see, and, with or without medical technology, dying tends to be a long and painful struggle. This is not the fault of the feeding tube. It is nature's fault. Our bodies are constructed to fight death. Everything from our bone marrow to the wax in our ears continually defends the body against invasion, attacking invaders who have breached the barriers and repairing injury. Death may be natural in that it is part of nature, but our bodies do not find it so. It is natural for them to struggle against death until there is nothing left to fight with, and anyone watching the struggle is going to be upset. It is hard to watch even when the patient is kept as comfortable as possible—even harder if the patient is in pain.

I believe this is the strongest reason for the fear of a technological bad death. Many of us who have lost friends or relatives have seen them suffer great pain. Unfortunately, we have sometimes seen doctors or nurses treating dying patients as though they were merely surgical cases, allowed only so much sedation every four hours. It may well seem more compassionate to starve and dehydrate a patient rather than to allow him to live on in such pain. And food and water are, of course, futile for a dying patient. But so is bedding, so is clothing, so is shelter. None of these will cure disease or prevent death except for the death that results when they are taken away. We can take away the bedding and the clothing and leave the helpless patient naked, so he dies of hypothermia or pneumonia. We can take away the artificial shelter of the hospital and leave the patient in a natural setting, so he dies of exposure. Or we can take away his food and water so he starves and dies of thirst. We can then soothe our consciences by saying that we have not killed anyone or intended anyone's death, but merely allowed nature to take its course.

But we are in control of nature. We decide what we will take away, and when, and from whom. Nature becomes our tool and does our dirty work for us, allowing us to feel blameless as we pull the stomach tube and disconnect the IV.

Most ordinary people, however, know there is a difference between omission and abandonment. They do not accept the idea, so popular with those who would remove food and fluid, that taking away a helpless person's food and water is morally superior to giving him a lethal injection. My distant cousin, a man with cancer, died from the removal of his food and water. His sister was not allowed to be in on the decision, but she watched him die in torment. While he was still able to feel pain, he was racked by agonizing muscle spasms. When he was finally dead, he was so contorted that the undertaker was unable to make him presentable. His sister, a registered nurse, considered it the most horrible death she had ever seen.

Of course, those who would remove food and fluid do not wish to torture the helpless: therefore, I can only assume that they have no idea of the quiet torment of starvation and dehydration. Doctors may say

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that it doesn't hurt, but knowledge of suffering cannot be gained second-hand. I do not understand how a headache feels by reading about constricted blood vessels. I know how those blood vessels feel because I have a headache. My experiences with starvation and dehydration have not encouraged me to think of them as a comfortable alternative to the "bad death" of feeding tubes, nor as a superior rival to the swift, painless, merciful death promised by those who support euthanasia.

But those who would remove food and fluid do not stop with the terminal patient. They are also concerned with those leading a technological "bad life"—those in PVS. They feel that many people are afraid of ending up in such a state, and this fear encourages grassroots support of euthanasia.

I agree about the fear, but I believe it has a different cause. I have had high school students express concern about ending up in PVS, perhaps because they have been taught that it can result from drinking and driving. But the older people I know are simply afraid of helplessness. In the celebrated case of Christine Busalacchi, the St. Louis papers and TV stations were full of debate on whether her cerebral cortex was functioning. The case was an example of medical arrogance—CAT scans and neurological tests were used to measure a human relationship, and the testimony of caregivers from different institutions was ignored. But most of the people I talked to about the case did not care about her cerebral cortex. They did not care whether or not Christine was capable of experiencing pleasure or pain or responding to the love of others. They saw a helpless person dependent on others for her care, without control over her basic functions, and they did not like the picture.

Some of those concerned with this problem would not remove food and fluid from those who are not terminal and who have a functioning cerebral cortex. But the ordinary people I am referring to do not want to live with a damaged but functioning cerebral cortex that results in limited or deranged behavior. They dread living with severe Alzheimer's Disease—unable to recognize family and friends, unable to care for themselves, obsessed with the idea that someone is stealing their clothes. Many feel the same about strokes and fear mental impairment, loss of bodily control and simple dignity.

The publicity surrounding PVS cases has certainly been used by the media as a stimulus for the euthanasia movement, but there is also a great deal of quiet publicity—in newspapers, in women's magazines, and on local TV stations—that shows an ugly picture of the lives of those who simply need care. These stories deal with the problems of living with Alzheimer's Disease or stroke damage, the abuse of the elderly by their children, nursing home horror stories, the cost of long-term care, and the problems of those who must work, care for their children, and also care for elderly relatives. The message is often veiled but clear—there is a strong possibility that the last years of life will be spent in a miserable state, devoid of human dignity, plagued by demented behavior and physical suffering, costly and burdensome to others. How much kinder it seems to give such people the blessing of a swift, painless, dignified death.

This is the great attraction of euthanasia: to spare ourselves the experience of the body's struggle with death. I believe that the only way to resist the seduction of euthanasia is to care—to nurse the terminal person with love, to manage pain better, to recognize and respond to the dying person as Ruth or Helen or Fred instead of as a problem to be solved. Dying people do not lose their personalities or their humanity. They still like lemon sherbet, fingernail polish, baseball news. They still need humor, consideration, loving caresses, and companionship.

Dying people can and should be nurtured—but what of the helpless person who is not dying? I believe the same things hold true. The quality of the helpless person's life depends to a great extent on the care received—on the competence, cheerfulness, and affection of those who do the caregiving. My grandfather, who lived for twelve years in a nursing home, was so paralyzed from the effects of Parkinson's Disease that he could hardly open his mouth, yet the nurses loved him and his family came and came often, bringing all the grandkids for him to enjoy—once even celebrating Christmas in his room so he could watch them open presents.

And as for people in PVS, we will never know what their damaged brains are capable of relearning unless we are willing to nurture them. It is highly unscientific, at the very least, to think that we know everything we need to know about the brain and that any behavior from a PVS patient that contradicts the current theory of "vegetablism" is irrelevant. Neurological tests and CAT scans do not constitute a theory. The behavior of the patient linked with the tests and scan are what we use to construct the theory. And since there is conflicting evidence about behavior, and since diagnosis is not infallible, it is inhumane to deprive people of food and water simply because current theory holds that they cannot feel it.

If our current theory is wrong, we will have caused a "bad death." Starvation and dehydration do cause suffering. They add to the cruelty and ugliness of death and reinforce the idea that the helpless person is no longer a member of the human family. I am sure that some will say that the sufferings of thirst and starvation can be alleviated, but it is asking a great deal of nurses and doctors to expect them to take away food and water and then treat the problems caused by taking away food and water. And if some compassionate doctors or nurses make an effort to discover effective sedation to remove the torments of

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thirst, if they try to keep the patient's electrolytes balanced and carefully adjust the amount of food and fluid (still using the feeding tube) in order to lessen the suffering as much as possible, then nature is no longer allowed to take its course. This death also becomes technological—and for the same reason: to make the patient as comfortable as possible while he dies.

If we are serious about fighting the euthanasia movement, I believe we must fight the idea that our status as members of the human family depends on our health, that under certain circumstances we will no longer be nurtured, our basic needs will purposely be ignored, and we will be abandoned to suffer and die. If we establish the idea that people no longer have lifetime membership in the human family, the practice of abandonment could become widespread —strongly encouraged perhaps by insurance carriers to cut costs. Then we may find ourselves no longer able to choose to die a death befitting the dignity of a man living to the end of his natural life, surrounded by concern for his comfort, and given the basic care his body still needs. Instead, our death will resemble the death of an unwanted dog who is abandoned by his owners and left to die of starvation and dehydration. Every responsible pet owner knows that it is a cruel fate for an animal, no matter how old or sick. And those who see a worn-out horse or an old dog left without food and water can call the police.

But if we decide that it is acceptable to treat humans worse than we treat animals, it should not surprise us if many people at the grassroots level decide that as along as they have to die like a dog, they would rather not suffer the fate of an abandoned stray. We should not be surprised if they work long and hard for the legal right to be quickly and painlessly "put to sleep" by the family "vet." Once this is accomplished, the evil inherent in such a practice will become all too apparent. As any member of the humane society can testify, disease and infirmity are not the only, or even the most common, reasons why Fido is put to sleep. FT

Stripped

Stripped
in the presence
of him for whom
pretense is
offense,
bared intentions
stand stark—
till He wraps
me with him
in graveclothes,
whitened
by blood.

Ann Horn

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The Hope of Heaven, The Hope of Earth

Christoph Schönborn

Many people today are worried about a certain politicization of the churches, or of some groups in the churches. The following, very fragmentary reflections are an attempt to make a small contribution towards alleviating these worries. These reflections do not focus on the immediately practical, on how the relationship between Church and politics is to be ordered, to what extent the Church ought and may "get involved" in politics, or where the respective boundaries and common areas lie. Today that relationship is mostly disturbed by attacks emanating from the power of the state against the freedom of religious groups. But one is also uneasy about the attacks that are being launched in the other direction: that is, when on occasion a claim to political competence is made on the basis of religious arguments, or when the prestige of ecclesiastical authority is adduced as a significant political factor.

But I mean to deal here with fundamental, rather than practical, questions. It is necessary to consider whether the relationship between Church and politics has not *always* been a relationship fraught with tension. History teaches us that it has. The real question is whether this tension is good and useful, or harmful and reprehensible. What direction, then, ought the Church to take? If she concentrates on the hope of life after death as her proper task, she is accused of a lack of responsibility for life here on earth. If she becomes more involved in temporal affairs, she is criticized for forgetting her orientation to eternal life.

We shall investigate this question in three steps. First, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's thesis of the socially damaging character of Christianity will introduce us to the question by showing us its coordinates. Next, we shall discuss the central question of the source of the perennial conflict between Church and politics. And finally, we shall attempt to bring into play a third element—the problem of evil—that is usually forgotten.

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I

In the concluding chapter of Rousseau's *Contrat Social,* which deals with the *religion civile,* the author says of Christianity: "Far from winning the hearts of the citizens for the state, it removes them from it, as from all earthly things. I know nothing that is more actively opposed to the social spirit." He declares the Christian religion hostile to the state, explaining that Christianity is a purely spiritual religion "which is occupied only with heavenly things: the native land of the Christian is not of this world." Rousseau holds that if Christians are unable to be good citizens, this is in keeping with the intentions of Jesus himself: "Jesus came in order to set up a spiritual kingdom on earth; thereby the theological system was separated from the political system, and this in turn meant that the state ceased to be *one* state, and that inherent tensions emerged, which have never since ceased to agitate the Christian peoples." The outcome is "a continuous struggle between the jurisdictions . . . which has made any reasonable civil order impossible in the Christian states." The effect of Christianity is that men now have "two legislations, two sovereigns, two native lands," so that they are subjected to "antithetical obligations." This is why the Christian can never be simultaneously pious and a good citizen. Accordingly, Rousseau holds that such a religion, which gives men a double citizenship, the earthly and the heavenly, cannot be integrated into society (*insociable*). Rousseau's thesis is not new, but it most clearly expresses the problem at issue here, namely, do Christians' hopes of life after

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death make impossible their taking responsibility for life here on earth. Is it so that since their hearts are attached to heaven, they cannot love the earth, and since their Lord is in heaven, they will never belong wholly to the lords of this earth?

Rousseau claims that Christianity is radically contrary to the *esprit social*, but if we look more closely at this accusation, we see that it contains in reality two mutually contradictory charges. The first charge is that Christianity weakens responsibility for society, since it turns men into cowardly slaves who think only of how they are to attain paradise, and are not interested in the well-being of society: "[The Christian] is little concerned whether everything here below is in a good or a bad condition." And, "ultimately, what does it matter whether one is a free man or a slave in this vale of tears? The main point is that one should attain paradise." One could almost fancy this was Nietzsche, who said, "The true Christians are created in order to be slaves."

The second charge seems to run contrary to the first: that beneath their disguise of weakness, Christians are in reality *des vrais rebelles*. They make a hypocritical show of submissiveness, but they are merely waiting for the opportunity to revolt, so that they themselves may usurp the power to which they pretend to submit. The pagans were not fooled, and this was why they persecuted Christians: secretly Christians were and are rebels against the state.

How does Rousseau arrive at such contradictory accusations in his rejection of Christianity? The answer lies in his solution to the problem. Thomas Hobbes, he claims, was the only one to have identified both the ill and the remedy: that we must "reunite both heads of the eagle and bring everything back to the political unity without which neither state nor government will ever be well constituted." "Everything that lacerates societal unity is useless," and this is precisely what Christianity does. Hence it must be replaced by the *religion civile*, which alone guarantees the unity of society. The double eagle has one head too many—that of the religious authority. If this "head" is not willing to identify itself with the principle of political unity, then the only solution is to cut it off. Rousseau's *Contrat Social* is militant, and although it makes a law of tolerance, it is totalitarian in its innermost depths. This was made most evident after 1789, when the heads began to roll in the name of the *religion civile*.

Why this excursion into Rousseau's political *rêverie*? Because it was Rousseau who so clearly formulated the problem about which we shall speak. One could make many historical and theological objections to his arguments, but that does not alter the fact that, in one form or another, Rousseau's theses have been cropping up continually since the beginnings of Christianity. The accusation that Christianity is hostile to the state and socially damaging, that it destroys the unity of society, is as old as Christianity itself. From this it can be seen that this charge does not merely stem from the wickedness or ignorance of the enemies of Christianity, but resides in the very essence of the matter. In other words, what we have here is one of the structurally significant foundations of the relationship between Church and politics, of Christianity and society.

II

Deus major est, non imperatores ("God is the greater One, not the emperors")—this cry of an early Christian martyr indicates concisely and clearly the source of the conflict. This is the second step in our argument.

Such a statement would have been unthinkable in the classical, pre-Christian world. Religion and state were then coterminous; it was not possible for there to be any antithesis between god and ruler, since the ruler was the god's representative. In the pre-Christian world, a man could be the citizen of only one city, the city of his gods, of his fathers, in which there was no distinction between religion and society. This was true even of the Roman Empire, that conglomeration of many peoples in which all the cults were assimilated and integrated into a single civic religion. In the pantheon of classical Rome it was not possible for any conflict between the gods and the emperors to arise, since the world of the gods and the world of men together formed, so to speak, one common household. Only when one bears this in mind can one properly understand why the classical world had no idea what to make of the Christians' attitude vis-à-vis the state. The pagan philosopher Celsus, towards the end of the second century, points out to the Christians: "You say that it is not possible for one and the same man to serve several lords. But surely that is the language of rebellion, the language of people who shut themselves off from other men as with a wall, and tear themselves loose from everything."

Because Christians refused to give cultic honor to the emperor and wished to serve only one master, namely their own, their behavior counted as rebellion. And since in addition the exclusiveness of their faith in their Lord left no space for the other gods, they were accused of godlessness, of atheism.

Christ brought something radically new into the world. With one saying he separated God and the emperor: "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God" (Matthew 22:21). He "de-divinizes" the emperor, and at the same time he indicates the obedience that is owed precisely to this emperor. When he stands before Pontius Pilate as one accused, he tells the representative of the emperor, "Yes, I am a king," but says at the same time, "My kingdom is not of this world." And when Pilate refers to his own power, Jesus does not dispute him, but replies: "You would not have any power

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over me, unless it had been given to you from above" (John 18:36-37; 19:11).

What is new about Christianity is not so much its doctrine as it is Christ himself. What is new in the Christians' behavior is their relationship to Christ. From his resurrection onward, Christ is honored and addressed by the Christians as *Kyrios* (Lord). They pray, as he himself taught them to pray, for the coming of his kingdom, the kingdom of God. It was inevitable that their belonging to Christ should appear to be a rivalry to the emperor, who himself laid claim to the title of *Kyrios*. The emperor could not tolerate the situation where citizens of his realm claim to have chosen another as their highest Lord. The governor appeals to the aged Polycarp to renounce his allegiance to Christ and to swear to the primacy of the emperor. Polycarp's reply demonstrates the whole significance of the conflict: "For eighty-six years I have served him [Christ], and he has never done me any wrong. How could I now blaspheme against my King and Savior?"

What is new about Christianity is this unconditional belonging to Christ, with the consequence that Christians have their rights as citizens in the kingdom of Christ or, as Paul says, "in the heavens" (Philippians 3:20). Their rights as citizens in the kingdom of Christ are more important to them than their earthly rights, and they are willing, if necessary, to yield the latter up. This was the attitude of Franz Jägerstätter, the Austrian farmer executed in 1943 who justified his solitary decision to refuse military service under Hitler on the ground that he could not at the same time serve the kingdom (*Reich*) of Christ and the Third Reich. This attitude brings a leavening of division into a heretofore complacent world. Thus it is not by chance that the early Christians felt themselves to be foreigners and pilgrims in this world, since their native land was with Christ "in the heavens," and they knew themselves to be en route to the "city to come" (Hebrews 13:14). A hymn puts it thus: "We are but guests on earth, and wander without rest towards the eternal homeland, bearing many kinds of burdens." The marvelous Letter to Diognetus in the second century speaks the same language: "They [Christians] dwell each in his native land, but only as resident aliens; they carry out all the tasks of a citizen, and endure all the burdens like foreigners; every foreign land is a native land to them, and every native land is foreign land to them."

It has repeatedly been asserted that early Christians lived in an intense hope of life after death. They awaited so keenly the imminent irruption of God's sovereignty and imminent return of Christ that there was no place left for an interest in this world, its miseries and its needs. It was, so the argument goes, only the failure of these events to materialize, and the sobering disappointment caused by the simple continuation of the course of history, that moved Christians to establish themselves as a stable earthly fellowship and to organize themselves as a structured Church. But this interpretation of Christian history, which appeared in the nineteenth century, is false, because it sees only one side of the reality. True, the first generations of Christians lived in an intense expectation of the imminent return of Christ (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 and other texts), but to say this is to describe only one aspect of the matter. It does not suffice to explain why Christianity, from its early days and on throughout its entire history, had become a source of conflict in society. A community that does nothing but look with yearning to the life beyond death is hardly likely to be considered a danger to the established order, especially if, like Christianity, it obliges its members to behave peacefully, justly, and humbly. If Christians merely looked on this world as a waiting room in which one watched for the signal to depart for the heavenly Jerusalem, there would be no occasion to think of them as anything more than mere mixed-up dreamers.

Jesus Christ, however, left behind quite a different charge from that of a passive waiting around. He did indeed confess before Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, but his final charge to his disciples was: "All authority in heaven and *on earth* has been given to me. Go therefore and make all peoples my disciples, and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you! And behold, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

These words explain why a conflict about Christianity had to arise. The future, heavenly kingdom of God is at the same time a present reality. Christians affirm that their *Kyrios* is already Lord of heaven and of earth. They believe that they are charged with the task of making all men, all peoples, disciples of Jesus and of bringing them to live and to act in keeping with Jesus' message. The early Church cries out with yearning for the speedy return of the Lord ("Maranatha," 1 Corinthians 16:22; cf. Revelation 22:20), but she acts with no less decisiveness to win men for Christ "from all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" (Revelation 7:9) *now*. The kingdom of God is "eschatological," it belongs to the end time; yet the end time has already begun in Christ. His kingdom is not of this world, but it comes into this world. For where men become his disciples, they form, not a group thrown together by chance, but a structured fellowship that is constituted in a visible manner and displays in its fundamental structure an organic continuity with its origin. The Church's fellowship is neither a merely secular religious grouping nor a purely spiritual community; it is neither an exclusively visible Church nor an exclusively invisible Church. It is both at the same time, and in an inseparable fashion: earthly and heavenly Church, a

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structured society and a spiritual fellowship.

Here lies the deepest root of the problem that Rousseau exposed. This is the new element in relation to the pre-Christian social systems: religion and society are no longer coterminous; the gods and heroes no longer form a unified cosmos. Rousseau's dream of closing this gap again and reestablishing the total *Unité sociale* would lead to totalitarianism. It is no longer possible to remove the dualism between Church and state, between the claim of the earthly city and the "city of God." Christians are "citizens of two worlds." But this means that the conflict which determines in ever-new variants the mutual relationship of these two worlds is "programmed in advance." The demands of the *civitas terrena* and the claims of the *civitas Dei* cannot be distributed between life on earth and life in heaven, or the material and the spiritual spheres, or politics and religion. For the conflict is inscribed in the heart of man, who must endeavor to be a good citizen of the *civitas terrena* without denying his belonging to the *civitas Dei.* Henri de Lubac has given a penetrating description of this unavoidable conflict:

> Thus there arises from the very nature of things a rivalry between the two, an almost unceasing struggle. Each complains of the "encroachments" of the other. Nothing is less secure or more exposed to danger than their equilibrium. Even when the men on both sides search for a settlement, it is only seldom that the two legislations find a full harmony. Scarcely has one conflict been laid to rest, when a new conflict breaks out, muffled or fierce, petty or tragic.
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> Twenty centuries suffice to attest that it is virtually impossible to find the equilibrium. At one time, it is the state that persecutes; at another time, the men of the Church usurp for themselves the rights of the state in one or other sphere. No form of separation or of unification is without its specific disadvantages. And the most perfect symbioses are likewise those that are most to be feared. The best turns most easily into the worst. Often, one does not know which authority is enslaved to the other; whether it is the Church that lords it over the world, or the world that has forced its way into the Church. In order to escape from the dualism, one falls into some kind of monism, and if the intermingling is openly recognized, new antitheses arise. . . . In the mildest cases, a permanent "mutual superiority" holds sway. The existence of the individual thus becomes more complicated in every sphere—if indeed he is not precipitated into serious conflicts. The believer and the citizen are torn asunder in the innermost sphere of one and the same person.

Thus Rousseau seems to be right in laying this conflict to the charge of Christianity: "Everything that lacerates societal unity is useless: all institutions that bring man into a state of self-contradiction are useless." This accusation has been repeated over and over up to our own time. Attempts have been made to resolve the tension by prescribing a unity for society and an identity for the individual in which no space remains for this conflict. All totalitarian social forms, whether atheistic, theocratic, or nationalistic, aim for such a unity. The experiences of our century justify one in doubting whether this unity is in keeping with human nature. We must urgently ask the opposite question, that is, whether the conflict is not healthier than the attempts to overcome it. Perhaps it is good and necessary for the tension between Church and society to exist—for the individual to be obliged to support this tension in himself and for society as a whole to support it and to fight out this battle again and again. For it is certainly possible that the equilibrium between Church and society and between the claims of both—an equilibrium so difficult to establish—is a positive challenge that is fundamentally beneficial to the individual man who must unite in himself the claims of both the Church and the society to which he belongs.

The decisive question, however, is: what kind of unity will remove the conflict between Church and society? In what does the reconciliation of the antitheses consist? It is not possible for any attempt to bring about the reconciliation of all antitheses—and thereby the total harmony of man with himself and with his world in a political, social entity (state, nation, classless society)—to take any other form than that of totalitarianism. Christianity has brought a decisive liberation here: the kingdom of God is not of this world, the sphere of the reconciliation of all antitheses is not to be found within history; perfect unity lies ahead of us, not as a utopian horizon in history but as a promise beyond history. Not even the Church is a place where all antitheses can be reconciled, and as long as the Church is "in the condition of a pilgrim," she will never know perfect unity (nor the perfect reunification of all Christians). The pilgrim Church is not yet the perfected kingdom of God. But this also means that the ultimate goal of man cannot lie in this world. Thomas Aquinas formulated the point with great clarity:

> *Homo non ordinatur ad communitatem politicam secundum se totum et secundum omnia sua, . . . sed totum quod homo est, et quod potest et habet, ordinatum est ad Deum.* (No man belongs wholly to the state, to the political community. Man belongs wholly only to God, to whom he is wholly oriented with all that he is, can do, and has.)

This does not mean that there is no orientation of

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man to society. Thomas Aquinas, and with him the entire social doctrine of the Church, emphasize that every man, as a member of the community, is oriented to the good of the totality of the community. By the same token, it does not, on the other hand, mean that man is utterly absorbed into the community.

Today we may perhaps not realize so clearly what a liberating power has lain, and still lies, in this distinction and in its practical consequences, since—at least in free countries—the separation of secular and spiritual authority has become something we take for granted. In fact, we owe this distinction, as well as the acknowledgment of the freedom of conscience that is linked to it, to Christianity's fundamental conviction that no man belongs wholly to the state, the nation, or the "collective," but can and may belong wholly only to him who is his Creator and his goal.

We can make this clear through two examples from the early Christian period, both of which have great relevance for today. It appears that classical medicine attached little importance to the life of the newborn. Hippocrates asks, which children ought one to bring up (which presupposes that it was not taken for granted that all should be kept alive). Cicero holds that the death of a child is something that can be borne with serenity. The wise Seneca, indeed, thinks it reasonable to drown sickly and weak children. Tacitus is surprised at the Jewish abhorrence of killing any newborns.

Christians, though, did clearly prohibit abortion from the very outset. They respect every life, even that of the newborn. This attitude can be understood only as the expression of the fact that human life is not evaluated primarily in terms of its value or lack of value for the totality of society, but is seen as the life of a human person who is entirely oriented to God from the first moment of his existence and is thus not available to other people to dispose of. To this day, the only way to justify the protection of unborn or handicapped life is on the basis of the inviolable dignity of the spiritual person created by God and oriented to God. It is, in my view, an illusion to seek to justify this inviolability on exclusively societal grounds. It is widely taken for granted nowadays that "social indications" are acceptable grounds for abortion, and this shows how close we have come to the view of classical paganism that the education of children is the art "of deciding which newborn children are worth bringing up."

A second example is the emancipation of women in Christian antiquity. Régine Pernoud has pointed out that the possibility of choosing an unmarried life for the sake of Christ brought women a liberation unheard-of in classical times. By deciding to belong to Christ alone, Christian women withdraw themselves from the *patria potestas* that was taken for granted in antiquity. The woman or girl no longer belongs wholly to her father and family. In this free choice, she proves herself to be an inviolable person, in the dignity that God has bestowed on her. Various accounts or legends of martyrs from the early Church show us that this new freedom was sometimes also paid for with such women's lives.

The double citizenship of which Rousseau complains, introduced into the world by Christianity, signifies de facto conflict and crisis. It brings a ferment of disorder into society. Not everyone is pleased with this, and so Christianity is repeatedly accused of dissidence and of secret rebellion. But an invaluable ferment of freedom is introduced at the same time, a ferment that again and again, in a unique way, defends the inalienable dignity of the person against every form of degradation.

III

What we have said up to this point can give the impression that the conflict criticized by Rousseau, which de facto recurs endlessly between the heavenly citizenship and the earthly, is caused by the clash of two unreconciled and irreconcilable worlds. Are "Church" and "world," *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena*, antagonistic entities, essentially hostile to one another? This tendency has arisen repeatedly in the long history of the doctrine of the two kingdoms. Its newest variant, which is still potently effective, is the view expressed by so-called "political theology" that the Church is something like the "institutionalized critique of society." We hear also of the "critically liberating function of the Church" in relation to society, giving the impression that a society which is permanently criticized in this way is ultimately a negative entity that must be fundamentally called into question. Indeed, the hallmark of this criticism is that society in all its spheres (economics, culture, defense) is continually being told that it should have a "bad conscience": not because of particular abuses and wrong attitudes, but fundamentally and universally. It is not the abusive practices of banks that are criticized, but their very existence; not this or that measure taken in the defense of a country, but the very existence of this defense. Behind this criticism, which likes to call itself "prophetic," there lies in reality a kind of "political millenarianism" which, in the name of some future paradisal society, rejects and demonizes the existing society en bloc, demanding that it be overthrown by revolution.

We have up to now presented the relationship between Church and society as one full of tensions. This picture would be one-sided if we failed now to be more precise by adding a new element to our discussion: the problem of evil.

Two basic temptations run through the history of the relationship between Church and society, between religion and politics in the West: we can call these, somewhat summarily, the naturalistic and the Manichaean temptations. The latter sees the two

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entities as mutually hostile by their very nature: the world is evil, only the "kingdom of light" is good, and an implacable conflict exists between these two. Evil is located on one side exclusively: the world, society, politics, etc.; the good lies only on the spiritual, heavenly, or future side. What I have called the naturalistic temptation consists in denying the problem of evil, declaring it to be the "so-called evil" (Konrad Lorenz) which in reality is nothing other than the play of forces according to the blind necessities of nature, in which there are conquerors and conquered, but not good and evil. This is the worldview in which the highest laws are the "struggle for life" and the "survival of the fittest." It is the worldview of Darwin and all his disciples, while the Manichaean temptation is that of the Marxist worldview. Jacques Maritain has characterized these two tendencies as typically "right" and "left." The left temptation is to hate that which is and to dream of that which ought to be; the "right" temptation is to see only that which de facto is, and to reject as daydreams that which ought to be.

Charles Journet (d. 1975), surely one of the most significant spiritual figures of modern Church history, recognized with rare clarity, as both a theologian and a vigilant observer of the contemporary intellectual and political scene, the great dangers of these two temptations, especially in the dramatic events of the 1930s and 1940s: the dangers of political ideologies that close themselves off completely to the claim of the kingdom of God, and the dangers of religious ideologies that want to change the kingdom of God directly into a political-revolutionary force. Both dangers come from a false view of the problem of evil.

Cardinal Journet pointed out again and again that, according to the Christian vision, society, *la cité de l'homme*, belongs to the natural order, the order of creation, which in itself is good and possesses its own positive values and its own finality. Culture, science, economics, and politics have their positive values that cannot, however, simply be identified with man's ultimate goal, which can only be God—and this goal gives man an orientation to an eternal determination that lies beyond all temporal values. The kingdom of God is this ultimate goal, which is already present in the Church and is to penetrate and reshape all temporal values, without yet calling their autonomy into question. The great merit of the Second Vatican Council is that it defined the relationship of Church and society in this way. The Church renounces all theocratic claims to a directly political or societal power. She wants to be a ferment in society by promoting all that is good, affirming all positive values, and helping to keep these values open to the ultimate goal of man. This is why the Council repeatedly speaks of the dialogue between the Church and the world.

What then is the source of the antagonisms that so often weigh down upon this relationship? It is not because of the nature of human society that conflicts between Church and world keep on erupting. Cardinal Journet speaks, with Augustine, of a third reality, of which people do not like to speak today: the *civitas diaboli*, the power of evil. Although no period of history has known such a massive number of external manifestations of evil as our century, an astonishing blindness exists on this topic. Here the Council speaks clearly:

> A hard struggle against the powers of darkness runs through the entire history of mankind, a struggle that began already at the beginning of the world and, according to the words of the Lord (Matthew 24:13; 13:24-30, 36-43), will endure until the last day. The individual man, drawn into this struggle, must continuously struggle to take his decision in favor of the good, and it is only with great efforts, with the help of God's grace, that he can attain his own inner unity.

IV

Let us attempt to draw some conclusions in the light of this clarification—which is certainly not comfortable, but is thereby all the more healthy.

1. It must be said, against all utopias, that there is no paradise on earth. We are here only as pilgrims; the goal of our life is not here, but "there," in God's eternal kingdom. The provisional character of all earthly realizations, even the greatest and most beautiful, is something we must never forget. Perfect justice, total peace, and completely successful identity do not exist in this life. To accept this frees politics from the compulsion to bring about the impossible by forcible means; it frees society from the penetrating critic who wants everything to be perfect, already here and now.

2. Against all resignation, however, it must also be said that (relative) joy, (relative) success, and (relative) justice can and should exist in this life. For the Christian, heaven is already on earth, in a certain sense. For where in this time, with all its provisional character, he attempts to create space for love, to lend a voice to justice, to live peace, there—even in the midst of great deficiencies and miseries—something of heaven can already be sensed on earth.

3. Against all utopias of the left, and against all resignation of the right, the Christian knows that the decisive struggle is not a class struggle nor a struggle for existence, but the continuous struggle against the power of evil, against the forces of pride, of arrogance, of hatred, through which "the prince of this world" (John 12:31) builds up his kingdom and his lordship, and which are the ultimate source of all injustice and all evil. The Gospel speaks here with an unsurpassable clarity. The victory over the power

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of evil can be won only through sacrifice and renunciation. No one can be spared from suffering, or from death, which sets a boundary to all our striving. If we become aware once more that we are given a short time in which to fight this struggle, and if we never forget that we are to find and to take the path to eternal life in this brief time span of our life, but can also fail to take this path or lose it, then we shall "make the best use of the time" (Ephesians 5:16), knowing how serious time is, and we shall "live sober, righteous, and pious lives in the present world" (Titus 2:12).

True responsibility for life here on earth is generated only by the hope in life after death. But the opposite is likewise true: only responsibility for eternal life gives the right joy in this life. Responsibility for life after death generates the genuine hope for this life here on earth. FT

The Filling

Cobwebs jammed the punched out holes
of the handlegrip.
It was a galvanized piece, except
where the faucet stem met the faucet body.
A crescent of rust proved
the spigot had not been used for years.

A quick twist and he broke the seal.
First nothing, then a low rumble, then fluid
the color of water and blood
formed a pool around the corner portico.

The bucket was still good, was dented
but no real damage.
Silt lay at the bottom collecting
the things only winter could leave behind.
Broken twigs and stems. The veins of
broken leaves. Four small stones and
a broken sparrow's feather.
A dip and quick circles collected the grains
that clung to the outer rim.

He swung the bucket upwards. The droplets
scattered the light and for a moment
formed a small vision,
a brilliant screen between
himself and the sun.
Each tiny shield came alive despite
a cargo of dust and debris.

For months only leaden rain
had prepared the ground and
polished the seeds for birthing.
But now the water ran to white.
He bent his knees and held
the bucket outward.
A quick tilt and the filling had begun.

Daniel Gallio

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Viktor Frankl at Ninety: An Interview

Matthew Scully

"Did you ever hear from Otto?" I asked Viktor Frankl.

Readers of Frankl's classic *Man's Search for Meaning: Experiences in the Concentration Camp* will remember Otto as the fellow prisoner to whom he recited his final testament before being sent to a "rest camp" for the sick prisoners of Auschwitz. "No one knew whether this was a ruse to obtain the last bit of work for the sick . . . or whether it would go to the gas ovens or to a genuine rest camp," Frankl wrote. The chief doctor offered that evening to take his name from the list. "I told him this was not my way; that I had learned to let fate take its course." Returning to the hut, "I found a good friend waiting for me."

"Tears came to his eyes and I tried to comfort him. Then there was something else to do—make my will. 'Listen, Otto, if I don't get back home to my wife, and if you should see her again, tell her that I talked of her daily, hourly. You remember. Secondly, I have loved her more than anyone. Thirdly, the short time I have been married to her outweighs everything, even all we have been through here.' . . . Otto, where are you now? Are you alive? What has happened to you since our last hour together?"

What did happen? "Ah, yes, Otto," Frankl recalled in an interview last year. "No, I heard nothing. One must assume he did not make it out."

Frankel wrote *Man's Search for Meaning* in 1946, the year before *The Diary of Anne Frank* came out and three years before Orwell's *1984*. Still entitled *From Concentration Camp to Existentialism* in German editions, it is as deeply somber a book as any to come from the era. It is a strangely hopeful book, still a staple on the self-help shelves, but inescapably a book about death.

Yet in Frankl's own case, fate took a different course. After the loss of his wife in the Holocaust he remarried, wrote another twenty-five books, founded a school of psychotherapy, built an institute bearing his name in Vienna, lectured around the world, and has lived to see *Man's Search for Meaning* reprinted in twenty-three languages and at least nine million copies.

Finding him at the University of Vienna, I realized, however, that the wistful retrospective I had in mind—Aging Lion Looks at Our Troubled World—would be not only trite but false. Dr. Frankl looks quite healthy. An assistant asked that students not take pictures because the flash hurts his failing eyes. But otherwise, approaching ninety, he sat in easy command—joking, pounding the table for emphasis, telling stories about Freud (whom he met in 1923 and worked with thereafter). Now and then he would dart to the blackboard to illustrate his idea of "dimensional ontology" or the "tragic triage" of life.

One story reflected Frankl's conviction that many psychotherapists are themselves mad. It was in the forties, he recalled, here in Vienna. He read a quotation from a noted modern philosopher and another from a schizophrenic patient, and asked his listeners to match quotation with author. Overwhelmingly, he said triumphantly (as though the results of the experiment had just come in), "the majority of listeners got it wrong!"

What philosopher and lunatic had in common, Frankl went on to explain, is the certainty that happiness can be attained by furious pursuit and a consequent rage at the unsatisfying results. His useful word for this is "hyperintention," a tendency that only inflames what is usually the real problem, our own self-centeredness. "Everything can be taken away from man but one thing—to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." The sane are those who accept this charge and do not expect happiness by right. Thus Frankl's

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own "logotherapy," which views suffering not as an obstacle to happiness but often the necessary means to it, less a pathology than a path.

Logotherapy amounts in nearly all situations to the advice, "Get to work." Other psychologies begin by asking, "What do I want from life? Why am I unhappy?" Logotherapy asks, "What does life at this moment demand of me?" Happiness, runs a favored Frankl formulation, "ensues." "Happiness must *happen*." Life should find us out there in the world doing good things for their own sake. Even "if we strive for a good conscience, we are no longer justified in having it. The very fact has made us into Pharisees. And if we make health our main concern we have fallen ill. We have become hypochondriacs."

At the time of his deportation, from a train station just blocks from where he was now speaking, Frankl was putting the final touches on a book advancing these same points. He had a chance before the war to go to America to write his books and build a reputation. "Should I foster my brainchild, logotherapy . . . or should I concentrate on my duties as a real child of my parents" and stay by them? He arrived home from the American consulate, visa in hand, to find a large block of marble sitting on the table. Recovered by his father from a local synagogue razed by the Nazis, it was, Frankl recalled, a piece from a tablet bearing the first letters of the Commandment, "Honor thy father and mother that thy days may be long upon the land." He let his visa lapse.

Frankl is the rare intellectual called to live out his theories, and then rewarded against staggering odds for his faithfulness. *Man's Search for Meaning* itself attests to his notion of hyperintention. Had he used the visa and the excuse of professional obligation he would not be the same compelling witness. The camps, he wrote, reveal man much as Freud and others had described him—a creature driven by ego and instinct and sublimated drives. But they reveal something even more fundamental—our defining "capacity for self-transcendence." "Man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those chambers upright, with the Lord's Prayer or the *Shema Yisrael* on his lips." Frankl—who in the early thirties coined the word "existentialism"—is the man who reminded modern psychology of one detail it had overlooked, the patient's soul.

Man's Search for Meaning is known for powerful scenes like the parting with Otto and for its insights from camp life. "If only our wives could see us now!'" said the man next to Frankl as they set off on a morning march to the labor site.

> And as we stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another upward and onward, nothing was said, but we both knew: each of us was thinking about his wife. Occasionally I looked at the sky, where the stars were fading and the pink light of the morning was beginning to spread behind a dark bank of clouds. But my mind clung to my wife's image, imagining it with uncanny acuteness. I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look. . . . A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth—that love is the highest goal to which man can aspire. . . . I understand how a man who has nothing left in this world may still know bliss. . . . In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way—an honorable way—in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment. For the first time in my life I was able to understand the meaning of the words, "The angels are lost in divine contemplation of an infinite glory."

Spared to serve as a worker, he pleaded with the guards not to destroy a manuscript he had hidden in the lining of his coat.

> "Look, this is the manuscript of a scientific book. . . . I must keep this manuscript at all costs; it contains my life's work. Do you understand that?" . . . Yes, he was beginning to understand. A grin spread slowly over his face, first piteous, then more amused, mocking, insulting, until he bellowed one word at me in answer to my question, a word that was ever present in the vocabulary of camp inmates: "Shit!" At that moment I saw the plain truth and did what marked the culminating point of the first phase of my psychological reaction: I struck out my whole former life.

The tone of *Man's Search for Meaning* is like this throughout: the reasonable, detached observer describing not only the radical evil around him but radical absurdity, stripped of everything "except, literally, our naked existence." The effect is to connect life at Auschwitz with life anywhere.

> We needed to stop asking ourselves about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—daily and hourly. . . . Therefore, it was necessary for us to face up to the full amount of suffering, trying to keep moments of weakness and furtive tears to a minimum. But there was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore wit-

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ness that a man had the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.

Viktor Frankl had called in reply to my first letter that he would be glad to meet me, but would "strongly advise" that I read his other five books translated into English. Too many American interviewers come to Vienna, Frankl complained, having read only his one famous book. These other books (including *The Will to Meaning*) appeared in brisk succession after *Man's Search for Meaning* was translated in 1959. In great demand, Frankl spent twenty years in the United States, lecturing, appearing on TV, holding professor emeritus status at Berkeley, and occasionally saying controversial things, such as his suggestion in the seventies that America should erect on its West Coast a "Statue of Responsibility." Of a modern political ideologue, Frankl observed, "He doesn't have opinions; his opinions have him."

I had resolved not to seem effusive or over-awed, like those fresh converts to logotherapy who, a colleague of Frankl told me, arrive at his door from all over the globe with offerings of gratitude. But it was not easy. Viktor Frankl, like Mother Teresa or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, is a person one can meet only over a chasm of moral experience.

A casual enough opener had suggested itself when I passed by his study into the office. "I am absolutely convinced," Frankl had said in *The Doctor and the Soul*, "that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidanek were ultimately prepared not in some ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers." It was clear he regarded Freud as one such thinker. Why, then, did I just see a bust of the great man on the way in?

He speaks of Freud with a kind of protective sympathy, a son happy the father was spared from seeing how all his dreams had worked out. Freud *was* a great man, "a genius," replied Frankl. So much that we know about the human psyche, we know because of Freud. But "even a genius cannot completely resist his *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of his time." And Freud's was a time of curiosity and excitement over the possibilities that lay hidden in the "basement" of human aspiration. He just forgot about the upper stories.

"The point of logotherapy?" I asked. "Exactly! Logotherapy sees the human patient in all his humanness. I step up to the core of the patient's being. And that is a being in search of meaning, a being that is transcending himself, a being capable of acting in love for others. . . . You see, any human being is originally—he may forget it, or repress this—but originally he is a being reaching out for meanings to be fulfilled or persons to be loved."

Frankl had heard of M. Scott Peck's *Road Less Traveled*, a popular book that declares, like *Man's Search for Meaning*, the hardness of life. In fact he had heard enough to wonder why the book and others like it pay no homage to the logotherapy of which they seem bland imitations. "But," he said with a dismissive wave, "it is no matter. Better that they should borrow from logotherapy than use their own nonsense."

Had he, I asked, been following our "Politics of Meaning" debate back in America? He had. But the question raised an unhappy story from their 94th and probably last visit to the United States. It happened, Mrs. Frankl recalled, a year earlier in the very month of Mrs. Clinton's "Politics of Meaning" speech in Austin, Texas. Some American friends called the producers of *Good Morning America*. Would they like to have the author of *Man's Search for Meaning* on the show to discuss the First Lady's existential angst? But either they did not know the name or had already booked some more intriguing figure like Howard Stern or Dr. Ruth. "This is how America treats Viktor Frankl?" Mrs. Frankl asked.

I wondered aloud whether this story might suggest a depressing possibility. As a general cultural drift, mustn't Freudian ideas, exactly because they validate the shallow in their self-absorption, inevitably triumph over Frankl and his more demanding message?

This brought a ferocious rebuttal. "But how can you say this! Show me another book that has sold so far nine million copies, as *Man's Search for Meaning* did! What more empirical evidence do you need? And these letters—Ellie, how many do we receive each day?"

"An average of twenty-three a day," said Mrs. Frankl.

"Yes, you see, twenty-three letters every day—still. And most of them are from Americans. And do you know what they say? Most just write to say, 'Thank you, Dr. Frankl, for changing my life.' "

"You see," he continued, "the intellectuals, the fashionable crowd, the high-brows, perhaps they do not care for it. Although I wonder. Sometimes they say, 'Of course it does not mean that we share the philosophical ideas of Dr. Frankl'—but they *use* it. I don't give a damn whether they share my philosophical conviction! But it is satisfying, deeply, that they are using it for the benefit of patients. . . . The man on the street, he has always understood what I am saying. He sees that something is missing. He realizes that he is more than his id, more than his drives."

This defensiveness was not only touching, but very odd. It turns out to be a complicated matter. There are those "high-brows" who believe that Frankl, however moving his personal testimony, is raising up all the old, unscientific notions of soul and conscience and guilt. Among these there is also a suspicion of religiosity, something I had made a note to bring up. But there are also critics with more standing who believe Frankl has always missed the unique

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evil of the Holocaust. This may explain why, for instance, one cannot find what after *The Diary of Anne Frank* is the second-most widely read Holocaust book in the bookstore of Washington's Holocaust Museum.

"Here for instance," he explained, "the jury of Vienna is absolutely against me, because I'm too much for reconciling—very mean to me. They are fearing that I'm one who has forgotten the Holocaust. In my whole book *Man's Search for Meaning*, you will not find the word 'Jew.' I don't capitalize from being a Jew and having suffered as a Jew, you see? I ask them, Are you angry with me? Yes. Why are you angry with me? Perhaps because I am too much of a reconciling spirit? Yes. So is it *bad* to be reconciling?"

The argument went back to the concept of collective guilt, to which Frankl is "strictly, 100 percent opposed." "I could adopt the concept if I were a National Socialist, because this is absolutely a concept in the framework of National Socialists, see? That it made no difference between Jews, one Jew and another Jew, Jews were absolutely *Untermenschen*, subhuman beings. And this concept justified them, as they thought, for all kinds of atrocities. But I start on the ground that guilt is, a priori, *personal* guilt. I can be judged guilty only for something I have missed, failed to do. But in no way can I be regarded as guilty for something an uncle of mine has done, or a grandmother of mine has done. This is 100 percent nonsense!"

It was this conviction, Frankl explained, that led him from Auschwitz back to Vienna, rejoining the very neighbors who had watched or participated in his persecution. "People forget what it meant at that time to join the Resistance. More or less, it meant at any moment being caught, being arrested, and sentenced to death, as my best friend at the time was sentenced to death. And all the more we have to admire the heroism of these people."

"But my point," he continued, "is that heroism ultimately can only be demanded or expected of someone—of only one person. You are never entitled to place the demand of heroism on any one else, not unless you have been in the same position, facing the same decision, the same way facing death as punishment. But anyone who had immigrated to the United States and, viewing the situation in the past from that place, is not entitled to tell anybody who had remained in Germany that he should have joined the Resistance, unless he himself has done so, facing all the risks, facing the question of whether his responsibility toward his whole family had allowed him, because he would have thrown his own family into the concentration camps."

It was almost time to go, so I raised the question of his own spiritual convictions. Readers, Frankl told me, are invariably curious to know whether he himself believes in God. And indeed the first thing one notices entering the apartment is a sizable crucifix in the hall. (Mrs. Frankl is a Catholic.) "The crowning experience of all for the homecoming man," he wrote in *Man's Search*, "is the wonderful feeling that, after all he has suffered, there is nothing he need fear anymore—except his God." Always his arguments take us back to the "soul," "the higher part of man," "the religious impulse," "the Unconscious God." Should we take these as metaphors, projections, and mythic archetypes, or when he said "God" did he mean God?

What distinguishes logotherapy from other schools of psychology is the humble recognition of an objective order that simply *is* and moral facts about the universe that are beyond our power to escape, modify, or reinvent. Frankl himself warned in *The Doctor and the Soul* against a strutting "nothing-but-ism" that declares our spiritual longings are nothing but instinctual drives and God nothing but a creation of the id. Without a Creator, I asked, wouldn't any notion of "spirit" collapse back into instinct and logotherapy fall apart?

Not quite, he answered, but in any case his own calling was to heal the soul, not save it. "I do not allow myself to confess personally whether I'm religious or not. I'm writing as a psychologist, I'm writing as a psychiatrist, I'm writing as a man of the medical faculty. . . . And that made the message more powerful because if you were identifiably religious, immediately people would say, 'Oh well, he's that *religious* psychologist. Take the book away!'"

"You see," he added, "I don't shy away, I don't feel debased or humiliated if someone suspects that I'm a religious person for myself. . . . If you call 'religious' a man who believes in what I call a Supermeaning, a meaning so comprehensive that you can no longer grasp it, get hold of it in rational intellectual terminology, then one should feel free to call me religious, really. And actually, I have come to define religion as an expression, a manifestation, of not only man's will to meaning, but of man's longing for an ultimate meaning, that is to say a meaning that is so comprehensive that it is no longer comprehensible. . . . But it becomes a matter of believing rather than thinking, of faith rather than intellect. The positing of a Supermeaning that evades mere rational grasp is one of the main tenets of logotherapy, after all. And a religious person may identify Supermeaning as something paralleling a Superbeing, and this Superbeing we would call God."

Dr. and Mrs. Frankl walked me out, pausing at the mementos in the study. There was a framed letter from his friend Martin Heidegger (the philosopher, it turns out, whose words audiences had confused with the schizophrenic). Next to that was a charmingly incongruous picture and letter from Mamie Eisenhower, an avid admirer of Frankl after

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President Eisenhower died.

Then he showed me a certificate declaring him an honorary citizen of Austin, Texas, where he lectured in 1975. "And when they conferred this on me, I said to the Mayor, 'Mr. Mayor, it would be more appropriate if I appointed you an honorary logotherapist.' 'Because,' I said, 'unless soldiers coming from America, among them certainly some youngsters coming from Texas, had not risked their lives in order to get us out of the camp, there would not have been any Viktor Frankl from the 27th of April of 1945, even less any logotherapy or books or anything.'"

And last on the tour, a painting of Auschwitz done after liberation by an inmate named Bruno, who, Frankl explained, was allowed to live so that the guards might have their own private portraitist. "And this corner here is the place where the ceremony of burial has taken place, and these are recycled coffins. And in one of these coffins, at this very place, I saw the body of my father who died there."

"You asked me earlier, Do I still think of these things? Not a day goes by when I do not! And in a way I do pity those younger people who did not know the camps or live during the war, who have nothing like that to compare [their own hardships] with. . . . Even today, as I lose my sight or with any severe problem or adverse situation, . . . I have only to think for a fraction of a second and I draw a deep breath. What I would have given then if I could have had no greater problem than I face today!" FT

Resurrection Follies: After a Jim Morphesis Diptych

In the diptych, I see two Messiahs:
one just prior to his closing breath
and another exactly one moment after.
I do not see the breath itself (it being breath).
Nevertheless, as my eyes stray from one
to the other then back to the first, the result
is that of a comical videotape of gridiron miscues,
where they forward-reverse-forward-reverse
the tumbling receiver for hilarious effect.
My mood, however, is less jolly as my eyes
reload-unload-reload-unload life into Christ.
Then suddenly all dyings and undyings assume
an editing room incredulity: Jairus' daughter
pops-up-slumps-down-pops-up-slumps-down
on her bed and Lazarus keeps kicking through
and disappearing behind his cave door
like some cop on a Stephen J. Cannell crime
drama in worldwide syndication.

Neither, Grandpa, at your wake in Wheaton
nor during your lonely flight as baggage to Boston
did you ever display such cinematic hilarity.
There is, however, still time.

Bill Stadick

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Books In Review

A Judaism in His Image

THE SACRED CHAIN: THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS. By NORMAN F. CANTOR. *HarperCollins. 472 pp. $35.*

Reviewed by **Lawrence Grossman**

TAKE A BRILLIANT and brash Jewish academic with no background in the primary sources of Judaism but plenty of childhood memories and odd prejudices on the subject, set him to reading some books about Jewish history, and let him write a History of the Jews. The result is a strange book peppered with embarrassingly elementary factual errors (not to mention typos), snide and cynical cracks, and outrageous generalizations. So bizarre are some parts of this book that it is hard to believe that the author intends them to be taken seriously. And all of this is served up in a wise-guyish style that sends the message: I will clue you in on the secrets that the Jewish establishment does not want you to know.

But the real weakness of the book is more fundamental than ignorance, arrogance, and eccentricity. The author has no feel for the Jewish religious experience in either of its two most prevalent forms, ritual performance and the study of sacred texts. To him—as to many other secular intellectuals of Jewish background—religion is nothing more than a manifestation of culture, and Judaism nothing more than a background for the emergence of avant-garde intellectual trends. Jewish tradition, Jewish piety, the Jewish quest for closeness to God—all are doomed to deconstruction.

Norman Cantor, a professor at New York University, was trained at Princeton as a medievalist, but has written widely on modern society and thought as well. Since the publication of his first book (a scholarly work on the Investiture Controversy), he has geared his writing not to the professional historian but to the educated layman. He writes in his preface that this book, too, is "for the lay reader, both Jew and Gentile, and the beginning college student." One shudders at the idea of *The Sacred Chain* as the introduction to Jewish history for such audiences.

RUNNING THROUGH this book is Cantor's insistence that just about all previous Jewish historiography has been a kind of racket, almost a conspiracy, of those who have had a vested interest in seeing the Jewish past as "the persistent record of Jewish superior morality and intellectuality as well as communal suffering, particularly at Christian hands." Cantor believes that even today there are powerful Jewish forces propping up this traditional motif. He charges that the wealthy Jews who finance university chairs of Jewish studies fear interpretations of Jewish history that deviate from the "victimization/celebratory model," and this has prevented the emergence of sophisticated interpretations of the Jewish past. "In the medical schools they endow," he claims, "sick Jews would not want nineteenth-century medicine to be taught, but nineteenth-century historiography is still fully acceptable to them!"

Cantor wants to "reopen fundamental questions about Jewish life," foremost of which is whether Jews have indeed been a saintly, ethical, passive, long-suffering folk—the image he attributes to the historical mythmakers. The untold story of Jewish history, for Cantor, is the active role that Jews have played in shaping their own destiny, for good and for ill. In fact, if Cantor's stereotypical Jewish historians ever lived, they died out long ago. Modern Jewish historiography is based on the premise that the history of the Jews is determined by the interaction between Jews and their surrounding environment. But Cantor means something more than this, something insidious, when he emphasizes Jews' responsibility for their own history. He is arguing that the Jews often got what was coming to them.

For Cantor, the problem goes back to the dawn of the Jewish experience. He views the Bible as a fictitious saga aimed at establishing a special relationship between God and the Jews. The Bible provides "made-up stories created from a much later time," an invented "obsessive historical myth" propounding "providential monotheism, puritanical ethics, and a rigorous behavioral code." Cantor notes that the covenant theology of the Hebrew Bible, by positing an elite chosen people, is the very opposite of the "democracy, multiculturalism, and ethnic equality" that contemporary Jews and their organizations espouse. Despite the efforts of modern Jewish apologists to rationalize the doctrine, the chosen people idea traditionally meant that other cults and creeds were inferior, an assumption that their practitioners could not but resent.

Furthermore, Cantor believes that Jewish leadership in virtually every innovative intellectual, economic, and cultural movement in the history of the West has inevitably aroused Gentile hostility. Christianity itself was a Jewish enterprise, and not simply because Jesus was a Jew; Cantor points out, in his characteristically flippant way, that "the Church of Rome is officially dedicated to Peter and Paul—two good Jewish boys, Simon Rocky and Saul of Tarsus." Islam, too, was a Jewish production. If Muhammad received a revelation, writes Cantor, the angel who dictated the Koran "spoke with a Jewish accent," since Islam is "a simplification, a vulgarization, of biblical Judaism." Spanish Catholic humanism of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the culture that established an inquisition and ultimately banished all overt Jews, was essentially Jewish too, since so many *conversos* and their descendants were important elements of it—including King Ferdinand and many

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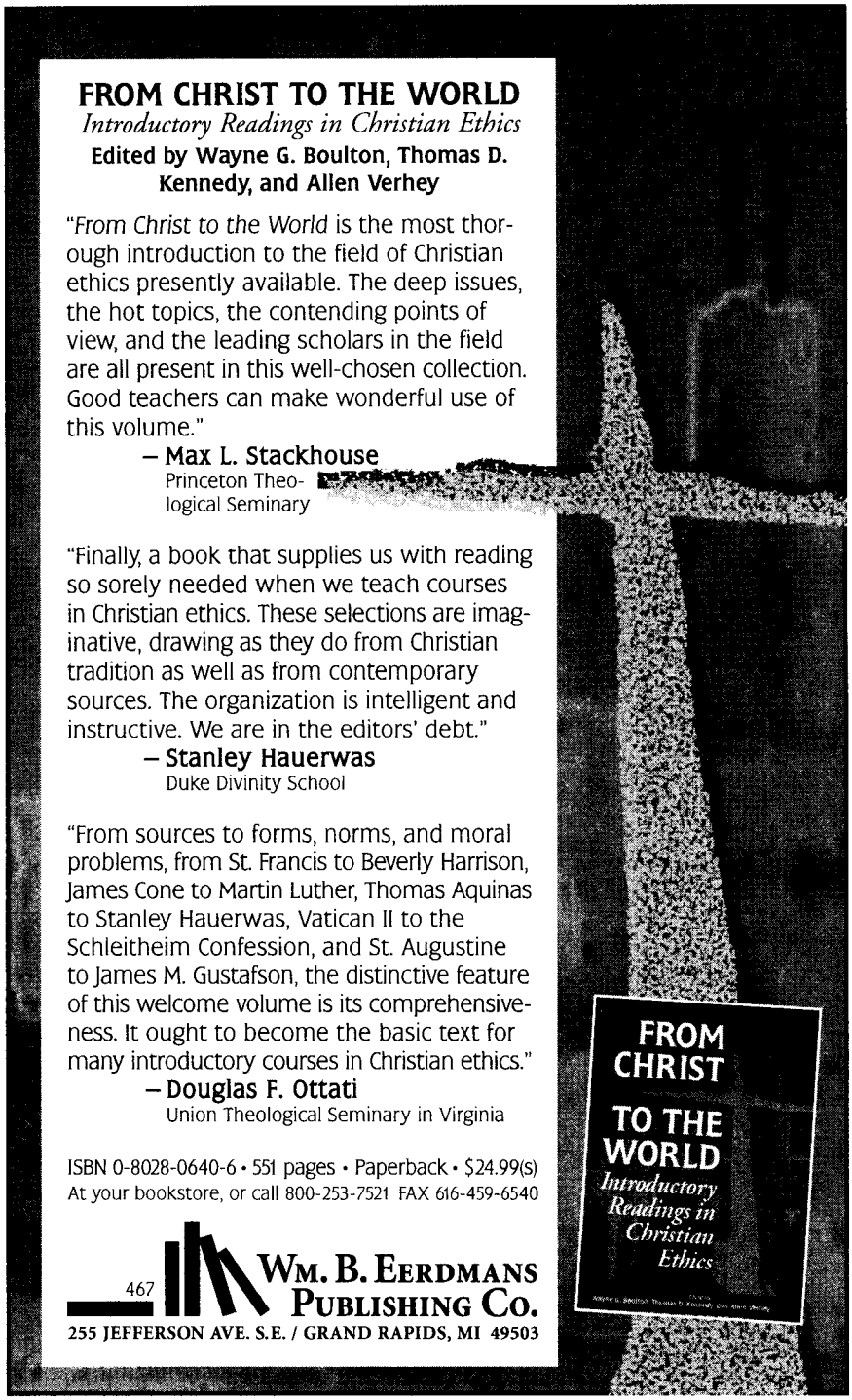
of the Dominican inquisitors. Modern philosophy triggered by Spinoza; modern capitalism anticipated by Jewish merchants; socialism and communism hatched by Marx and his primarily Jewish successors; cultural modernism sparked by Freud, Durkheim, Boas, and Einstein; and even today's postmodernism—pioneered by Wittgenstein, Chomsky, Levy-Strauss, Derrida, Bloom—are all products of Jewish genius.

Cantor believes that if Jews wish to boast of Jewish contributions to civilization, they must also acknowledge the anger—the anti-Semitism—in traditionalist circles at the sweeping social changes that Jews have precipitated. In a typical passage of stunning heartlessness, he suggests that the anti-Semites between the two World Wars who perceived Jews as the motive force behind both capitalism and communism were not entirely wrong; he mentions, but does not document, "circumstantial and anecdotal, even some statistical verifications for the popular anti-Semitic double-faced image of the Jews around 1930 as both slippery entrepreneurs and conspiratorial communists." And in his tiresome pose of uncovering the sordid truth that the establishment insists on hiding, Cantor adds that "nowadays . . . it has become politically incorrect in the controlling American Jewish precincts to verify the existence of this provocative polarity."

Why have Jews been responsible for so much innovation? Though he sometimes professes an agnostic approach to the explanation for Jewish preeminence, more often he cites the Jewish gene pool: generations of endogamy, meticulous attention to what is eaten and how it is prepared, and traditions of group solidarity have made possible the evolution and reproduction of an intellectually superior race. How unfortunate it is, Cantor laments, that Hitler discredited racial theory by using it as the basis for genocide.

Cantor's desire to shock is not without its uses. In an insightful discussion of American Jewish adherence to a "radically secular new view of the First Amendment" in the twentieth century that would deny all government aid to religious schools, he points out that the Jewish organizations that championed total Church-State separation were acting against the interests of their own constituents, whose weakening Jewish identification could only suffer greater erosion from years of exposure to the nonsectarian public school in the naked public square. Cantor is also on the mark when he notes the irony that the American Jews who are so prominent in the entertainment industry promote pagan cultural values that are the antithesis of Jewish teachings. But *The Sacred Chain* contains very few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such bright spots.

If the heroes of Jewish history, in Cantor's view, are the thinkers and entrepreneurs who transformed and repeatedly reshaped the Western world, and, in the process, evoked anti-Semitic backlash, the Jewish religion gives him great discomfort. The prayers and sacred writings Cantor recalls from his childhood and more recent forays into the synagogue are mumbo-jumbo; the meticulous ritual is mechanical and meaningless; the religious attachment to the Land of Israel is chauvinism; the theological and mystical speculation is sheer obscurantism (with the exception of the works of Maimonides, insofar as they accord with rationalist principles).

In his introduction, Cantor asserts that the up-to-date, antiestablishment historiography in this book could have a "potential therapeutic, possibly reforming impact on Jewish culture and society." In truth, his prescriptions for the Jewish future fully expose his skewed vision of the Jewish past. Since the ultimate significance of the Jewish experience, for Cantor, is nothing more than the development of an extraordinary gene pool, he views the prospect of the demographic erosion and eventual disappearance of the Jews as a distinct group with equanimity. Those special genes will now enrich "Episcopalian and Protestant bloodlines" in America, and, as peace comes to Israel and its neighbors, intermarriage will bring about "a new Judeo-Arab Near Eastern elite."

Short of the coming of the Messiah, Cantor does provide one last chance for Jewish survival. This would entail recreating Judaism in his own image by commissioning "Jewish professors in the leading universities" to "reinterpret" the religion "in light of modernist and postmodernist thought." Similarly, Jewish writers, artists, musicians, and media people should develop a new liturgy, to be revised every five years, that would speak to the esthetic sensibility "of the current age." That is, they should dilute, distort, and amputate a three-thousand-year-old religious civilization to suit the fleeting late-twentieth-century intellectual fads of secularized Jewish professors and literati.

Though the familiar Jewish aphorism states that after the biblical era the gift of prophecy is given only to children and fools, I would hazard a guess that Judaism will be around long after modernism, postmodernism, and Cantor's perverse book are no more than antique curiosities.

Life on the Cutting Edge

THE POWER OF CULTURE: CRITICAL ESSAYS IN AMERICAN HISTORY. Edited by RICHARD WIGHTMAN FOX and T. J. JACKSON LEARS. *University of Chicago Press. 292 pp. $42.*

FABLES OF ABUNDANCE: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF ADVERTISING IN AMERICA. By JACKSON LEARS. *Basic Books. 492 pp. $30.*

***Reviewed by* A. J. Bacevich**

NEW TIMES rightly demand new histories, innovative in approach, perspective, and subject matter. And cultural history (a blend of social and intellectual history that owes much to American Studies) is rich in potential to answer the bewildering dilemmas of our new times. These two books attest to that potential while also suggesting the obstacles, mostly imposed by practitioners themselves, that currently deprive cultural history of a wider audience.

The essays in *The Power of Culture* illustrate the varied and often unconventional themes that engage the attention of cultural historians. In doing so, the collection also reveals the spacious boundaries claimed by those who work the field. An examination by Karen Halttunen of narrative accounts of murders in early America, for example, shows how changes in literary form presaged changes in Americans' view of evil. The displacement of neighborhood grocers by supermarket chains in interwar Chicago, for another example, provides a framework for Lizabeth Cohen to explore connections between class and patterns of mass consumption. A third essay analyzes how the concept "obligation" was used to generate support for World War II. Citing evidence ranging from magazine ads to Norman Rockwell's enormously popular rendering of "the Four Freedoms," Robert B. Westbrook concludes that "Americans were fighting World War II to protect essentially private interests and discharge essentially private obligations"—a motivation with profound implications for postwar conceptions of civic responsibility. A fourth essay, by Michael L. Smith, takes a retrospective look at the high-tech future depicted by the World's Fair of 1964 and sees it as an elaborate corporate-engineered exercise in nostalgia. In a fifth essay, a decade-long brouhaha about an ugly modernist sculpture in front of an ugly federal office building in New York's Foley Square allows Casey Nelson Blake to compare elite, popular, and bureaucratic attitudes toward the use of public spaces.

By the standards of conventional history, such topics might seem quirky or obscure. In fashioning their arguments, moreover, the authors in each instance rely heavily on nontraditional sources, employing as "texts" such artifacts of low culture as popular literature, corporate advertising, trade publications, handbills, and other ephemera.

Yet it is angle of vision rather than method that invests these essays with their considerable interest. The contributors to *The Power of Culture*, like cultural historians generally, consciously reject the worldviews of the "liberal" and "radical" schools that for at least the past thirty years have monopolized historical discourse. Indeed, one underlying aim of cultural history is to repudiate both camps, exposing the errors and misconceptions of liberal orthodoxy and the radical left alike. Given the authority of those two

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schools—the fact that they have for so long marginalized alternative points of view—the critique advanced by cultural historians is most welcome. Those who (like conservatives) have languished among the excluded will find much in that critique to applaud. By demolishing the assumptions that have dominated contemporary historical thought and by incorporating into the historical mainstream phenomena hitherto largely ignored, cultural historians create new possibilities for reenvisioning the past. Particularly notable in this regard is an attitude toward religion that, if not sympathetic, at least recognizes religious belief as worthy of serious study rather than derision.

So perceptive in exposing others as narrowly doctrinaire, however, cultural historians are vulnerable to the same charge. At one level, the spirit of cultural history would seem to require inclusiveness, receptivity, and intellectual playfulness. At another level, the cultural historian becomes as dogmatic as any Marxist true believer. Today's hip cultural historian is in the thrall of the latest intellectual fashions: semiotics, deconstruction, Michel Foucault, and a ritual hostility to the West and all its works. Were that not enough, the authors of these essays share a political perspective rooted in the idols of political correctness—race, gender, and ethnicity. The result is predictable. *The Power of Culture* is riddled with self-satisfied posturing embedded in a leaden prose studded with obfuscating jargon. In their introduction, for example, Richard Wightman Fox and Jackson Lears write:

> Epistemological challenges to conventional notions of objectivity are also in some instances political challenges to the hegemonic discourse of instrumental reason. Feminist scholars were among the first to realize this. . . . Grasping the contingent character of categories once deemed immutable came easily to feminists as well as to critics of the imperial de-

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signs that for so long had been legitimated by the supposed superiority of Western science. The turn toward textuality has coincided with an awakening of feminist and environmentalist consciousness.

Within a select circle of the initiated, no doubt, such pontificating strikes a responsive chord. But historians who prattle about truth coming "easily" to feminists and critics of the evil, imperialistic West are writing off the larger public unconvinced of either feminism's infallible insight or the West's irredeemable depravity. And those too lazy to write clearly—those who choose to parade their sophistication with self-indulgent bombast—necessarily cut themselves off from a general audience. In so doing, cultural historians risk throwing away the promise of their enterprise. Put off by such pretentiousness, readers in search of history will confine themselves to the memoirs of Warren Christopher. Cultural historians will continue to spout off to one another, of course, but few will listen to what they have to say.

UNFORTUNATELY, *Fables of Abundance* by Professor Jackson Lears of Rutgers University makes precisely this point. For admirers of Professor Lears' earlier work, the estimable *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920,* this book will come as a disappointment.

For the energetic and resourceful cultural historian, a comprehensive study of advertising's role in the development of American society would seem to provide an incomparably rich environment in which to exercise his craft. Despite prodigious research and occasional flashes of insight, Professor Lears kicks that opportunity away. *Fables of Abundance* is rambling, undisciplined, and poorly focused.

The problem is not that the author lacks for things to say. His hypothesis is singularly provocative. According to Lears, modern advertising can plead not guilty to the charge that is it has seduced Americans into sacrificing their souls to materialism. Rather, he argues, advertising in conjunction with the mass production of consumer goods has contributed to the *disenchantment* of the material world, draining it of the fantastic or sensuous qualities that it had possessed in an earlier age and thereby causing Americans to become disconnected from the world in which they live. In other words, Lears writes, "The problem was not hedonism but the lack of it—and not materialism but the spread of indifference toward a material world where things were reduced to disposable commodities."

Developing this bold hypothesis in coherent fashion would pose a formidable challenge to the most gifted historian. Unfortunately, it is a challenge that Lears hardly takes up. His account lacks balance. Although the antics of those who peddled patent medicine in the nineteenth century receive fulsome treatment, we learn virtually nothing about advertising from the 1960s onward and we never learn the reason for the disparity of emphasis. The author moves from one topic to another with little apparent logic (though he takes care from time to time to bow in the direction of the PC idols). And the author's use of evidence, although drawn from an impressive range of sources, seems arbitrary rather than persuasive. His disregard for the reader is evident not only in his bloated style ("The triumph of a positivistic version of Cartesian dualism required the sanctification of a particular vision of science") but even in the ads chosen to illustrate the text: in many cases, the reproductions are so small as to be indecipherable.

"Good prose is like a windowpane," George Orwell once observed. Professor Lears quotes the observation to take Orwell and "others before him" to task for clinging to a "naive faith in the transparency of language." Those on the leading edge of cultural history are too clever by half to fall for such old bromides—which is unfortunate. One wishes that they would adopt Orwell's aphorism as their motto and tape it to their word processors, before their cleverness leads to the demise of an otherwise worthy scholarly enterprise.

Reversing the Charges

THE FABRICATED LUTHER: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SHIRER MYTH. By UWE SIEMON-NETTO. *Concordia. 186 pp. $12.99.*

Reviewed by **Robert Benne**

"I'VE ALWAYS FELT fortunate that I didn't belong to a church tradition with a brilliant founder; that way I haven't had to spend my time defending him." Such was the icy response of John Bennett to a young Lutheran theologian defending Luther's two kingdoms doctrine against the negative judgments of Ernst Troeltsch and Reinhold Niebuhr. That was in the early 1960s, so this sort of jousting has been going on a long time. In a recent *Christian Century* symposium Max Stackhouse and Dennis McCann responded to my criticism of their "Post-Communist Manifesto" by deciding not to respond too sharply. "It's hard enough being a Lutheran ethicist," they said, "if one always has a bad conscience for speaking of good works."

But this book is not just another effort by another Lutheran, Uwe Siemon-Netto, to clear the good name of Martin Luther and prove that the phrase "Lutheran social ethics" is not an oxymoron. Like many Lutherans, Siemon-Netto is outraged by scholars and journalists like William Shirer who draw a direct connection between Luther's alleged "quietism" and the rise of Hitler in Germany. Indeed, Shirer's viewpoint lives on at the Holocaust

ROBERT BENNE *is Jordan-Trexler Professor of Religion at Roanoke College and the Director of its Center for Church and Society. His new book,* The Paradoxical Vision: A Public Theology for the Twenty-First Century *(Fortress), elaborates a Lutheran social and political ethic.*

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Memorial Museum in Washington (where visitors are shown a film that accuses Luther of being the progenitor of Germany's National Socialism) and in the remarks of an Alan Dershowitz: "It is shocking that Luther's ignoble name is still honored rather than forever cursed by mainstream Protestant churches."

The author, who interrupted his career as a journalist for several major German newspapers and journals to study church history and theology, is passionately devoted to setting the record straight. But his intent is more than simply clearing the good name of a hero of the faith for millions of Christians. After all, the charge made against Luther is not that he made theological errors that led his followers astray in their private religious lives. On the contrary, the accusation is that Luther's beliefs and actions led to disastrous historical consequences, not only in the Germany of his time (with the Christian submission to the princes and the slaughter of the peasants), but in the Germany of the twentieth century, when Lutheran Christians failed to resist the rise of Adolf Hitler. These charges are extended to Lutheran communities in South Africa and Chile, for example, which allegedly identified themselves with an unjust status quo on the basis of their Lutheran convictions. Further, so the indictment goes, the Lutheran accommodation to the Communists in East Germany is a confirmation of Troeltsch's judgment that Lutheranism will comply with any political establishment. It has no social ethic on which to take a stand against worldly powers.

Not only does Siemon-Netto think these charges are false, but he believes that interpretations and actions based on stereotypical thinking about "The Fabricated Luther" have contributed to the real catastrophes of the twentieth century. Turning the tables on the stereotypes of Luther, he argues that the most serious historical calamities have been allowed not by "quietistic" Lutherans (who were not in fact quietistic), but rather by those who simplemindedly thought them so.

The author begins with a theoretical chapter on the role of "cliché" in modern communication. Clichés are false typifications of persons, movements, or events that are impervious to qualification by complicating knowledge. Somewhere along the way Luther's and Lutheranism's political ethic was typified in a cliché that has resisted historical falsification. Siemon-Netto thinks Troeltsch the main culprit, though he has been abetted by those like Reinhold Niebuhr who uncritically took over Troeltsch's dictums about Luther. But the cliché was immeasurably reinforced by the small band of "German Christian" theologians of the 1930s who perverted beyond all recognition Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms.

The author mounts several major attacks to defeat this cliché-thinking. He delves into Luther's life. He shows that Luther was active in resisting, advising, and cajoling the political authorities of his day. He goes into Luther's teaching on the two ways that God reigns in the world (by Law and Gospel) and shows how it has real resources for judging and even resisting worldly powers. He shows how early Lutheranism elaborated grounds upon which the lower magistrates can and should resist the prince or king—an approach usually associated with Calvinism. He even indicates that Lutheranism articulated criteria for the people taking up arms against tyrants. These criteria were not merely theoretical. They became the basis, for example, "for one of the most celebrated events in the history of resistance: the fourth Huguenot war that . . . guaranteed the French Protestants the freedom to practice their religion."

All this is fairly standard fare. Lutheran scholars in many countries have made these points more fully and carefully than Siemon-Netto. Things get more interesting when he adds two further "relativizations" of the Luther cliché. One has to do with the fascinating story of Carl Goerdeler, the Lutheran mayor of Leipzig during the 1930s. The story is relatively unknown because, the author claims, it was suppressed by the Nazis (for obvious reasons), and by Communists and leftist historians because it represented serious resistance to the Nazis that came from orthodox Lutherans. Goerdeler was an early opponent of Nazism; he was outspoken in his defiance of the Nazis from 1933 on, and he finally resigned when the Nazis destroyed a statue of Mendelssohn that stood in the main square of Leipzig. He joined an opposition organization (primarily made up of aristocratic and military conservatives) that planned to arrest Hitler and thereby transfer power to others in an orderly, Lutheran way. He indefatigably travelled abroad to warn the allies that Hitler was no normal leader and that his maniacal tendencies would lead to the destruction of the Jews and attacks on both Russia and the West. He pleaded with Chamberlain to resist Hitler at Munich. He tried to get the allies to guarantee support for his resistance movement if it moved against Hitler.

All of this came to naught, Siemon-Netto argues, because both American and British authorities at the highest levels thought in clichés about Germans (militarists), Lutherans (quietists), and conservatives (Hitler sympathizers). They couldn't possibly be right about Hitler and they couldn't possibly be serious about their resistance to him. After all, weren't they German Lutheran conservatives? This way of thinking, the writer argues, prevented the West from acting decisively when such action could possibly have stopped Hitler in his tracks. (Goerdeler, by the way, was imprisoned and in early 1945 was executed by the Nazis.)

Another venture the author uses to destroy the "Luther cliché" is an account of the momentous events of 1989, when Communist hegemony in East Germany ended nonviolently. Siemon-Netto argues that the agitation for nonviolent change that fi-

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nally brought the Communists down was led by Lutheran clergy and laity. He details their names, churches, and actions. They were, he avers, operating out of classical Lutheran theology that was decisively shaped by the orthodox Lutheran Franz Lau, who, at the crucial time of the church struggle with the state in 1952, wrote a book entitled *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Realms*. Again, the cliché about Luther and Lutheranism is at least dented, if not destroyed.

Peter Berger, in a fascinating preface to the book, asks not so much about the accuracy of Siemon-Netto's argument as about the reasons cliché-thinking about Luther and Lutheranism has continued in such an unchallenged way. He suggests that cliché-thinking had important political uses for the Communists and their left-leaning sympathizers in the West. The clichés were used to generate guilt among Lutherans for their alleged complicity with Hitler and to open the way for their accepting the utopian schemes of the Communists (something to which Lutherans are typically averse). To do this, the stories that Siemon-Netto now tells had to be suppressed.

The book is not elegantly written nor is it scholarly in a conventional way. It makes an argument based upon shining examples of resistance, but such examples cannot in themselves disprove that Lutheranism creates a general ethos of passivity among the broader population. There can be little doubt, however, that Siemon-Netto has made a robust attack on clichés that deserve to be destroyed. He deserves our appreciation.

Coming in May

Waco: A Massacre and its Aftermath

by Dean M. Kelley

The Convergence of the Twain?

Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to an American Public Philosophy. Edited by R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach. *Cambridge University Press. 352 pp. $59.95.*

Reviewed by **Kenneth L. Grasso**

The audacious and ambitious intellectual project proposed by this volume must be understood in the context of two developments. The first concerns contemporary America's quest for a substantive public philosophy. That we need such a philosophy is today widely recognized. America's loss of a public philosophy, it is increasingly apparent, has devitalized our institutions and deprived our public argument of coherence. Perhaps the leading candidate to address this loss is the form of liberalism associated with the idea of the sovereign self and championed by such influential intellectuals as John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, and Laurence Tribe. Nevertheless, although embraced enthusiastically by our cultural elites, this liberalism is by no means uncontroversial. Today's culture wars attest that the morality espoused by contemporary liberal theory is abhorred by large segments of the American people.

The second development relates to the Catholic intellectual tradition. On the one hand, an increasing number of thoughtful individuals have turned to the Catholic tradition in the hope of finding there either a coherent alternative to the liberal model of man and society or, at least, the intellectual resources necessary to remedy the most glaring deficiencies of contemporary liberalism. On the other hand, there is the far-reaching development in Catholic social teaching that crystallized at the Second Vatican Council (what George Weigel has termed the Catholic human rights revolution) that has transformed the Church into a principled supporter of the institutions, practices, and principles of the free society.

Edited by R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach, this volume consists of twelve essays (with an introduction by Douglass and a conclusion by Hollenbach) designed to bring the Catholic and liberal intel-

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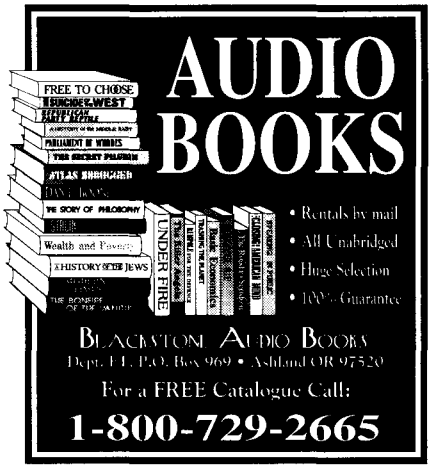

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lectual traditions into conversation. This conversation is intended to initiate a process of "mutual learning" that will afford both traditions "an opportunity to grow," and enrich "what they themselves intrinsically are." The ultimate goal of this conversation, however, reveals the provocative character of the intellectual project this volume proposes. This conversation, apparently, designed both to effect a rapprochement between Catholicism and liberalism and to bring about a gradual convergence of the two traditions (at least at the level of political theory). This, in turn, will presumably lay the groundwork for the new public philosophy America needs.

A project effecting a convergence between the political theories of the Catholic and liberal traditions, the editors recognize, might be viewed with skepticism in light of the "antagonism and alienation" that has traditionally characterized the relation between the two. Nevertheless, there is precedent for the project: "The American 'proposition' has in reality always been a synthesis of different beliefs drawn from a variety of sources." Besides, such skepticism overlooks the fact that the Catholic and liberal intellectual traditions "have had fundamental differences in the past that they have successfully resolved." "Both traditions," furthermore, have changed in recent years, in the process "redefining rather fundamentally what they stand for." Thus, if we do not allow ourselves "to become obsessed with certain particularly divisive issues" (e.g., abortion) about which the two traditions continue to have "differences," it becomes clear that Catholicism and liberalism "no longer stand in principled opposition to one another."

The good news about this volume is that it contains some fine essays. Whatever reservations one might have about this or that aspect of their individual arguments, there can be no question that anyone interested in Catholic social thought and its possible contribution to the forging of a public philosophy for contemporary America will find the essays by Peter Steinfels, Philip Gleason, Joseph A. Komonchak, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Louis Dupré, and Paul E. Sigmund, and Hollenbach's conclusion as well, worthwhile reading. The bad news, however, is that *Catholicism and Liberalism*, though far from a bad book, is nonetheless a profoundly disappointing one. The whole of the book somehow equals less than the sum of the parts.

IT IS DISAPPOINTING, first, because the serious encounter between liberalism and Catholicism it promises never quite materializes. In part, this is due to its generally perfunctory treatment of contemporary Catholic social thought. The past century has been an extraordinarily fertile time for Catholic social thought. Indeed, it is at least arguable that during no other century has there been such serious, sustained, and radical reflection on the implications of the faith for the right ordering of life in society. One thinks here immediately of the seminal series of social encyclicals from *Rerum Novarum* to *Centesimus Annus*, of the historic documents of the Second Vatican Council, and of the pathbreaking work of thinkers like Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray. Admittedly, most of these texts are at least touched on somewhere in this volume. Astonishingly, however, only rarely do the essays engage in a serious and systematic fashion either this rich body of literature or the key ideas that inform it (e.g., subsidiarity, the dignity of the human person, and natural law).

In part, it is also attributable to the level at which these essays tend to engage the traditions. Neither tradition is reducible to simply a theory of politics. At the heart of both Catholicism and liberalism are distinctive understandings of the nature and destiny of man—understandings, in turn, rooted in distinctive metaphysical and theological visions. While the metaphysical and theological vision of Catholicism is theocentric and Christocentric, liberalism reflects the anthropocentric rationalism of the Enlightenment. And, inasmuch as the political theory of each tradition is ultimately rooted in these visions, an understanding of their visions is a precondition for an understanding of their political theories.

The moral realism, for example, of Catholic social thought—the insistence on a universal and knowable human nature that is the source of obligatory moral norms and that possesses a knowable good—is rooted in the Catholic conception of a universe that is intelligible because it is divinely created and bears the imprint of the divine logos. The personalist understanding of man in Catholic social thought requires a conception of man as a being created in the image and likeness of God. (Our idea of the person emerged largely as a byproduct of the Christological controversies within the early Church.) Similarly, Catholicism's understanding of the origins and nature of human social life is rooted in the triune character of the God whose image we bear. Catholic social thought thus insists on the dignity of the human person as the fundamental moral fact from which social and political life must take its bearings, for man in this view not only bears the image of God but is called to communion with God, destined to share in the divine nature, and joined with God through the Incarnation.

Likewise, if for the liberal tradition the individual human being continues to be surrounded by the aura of sanctity originally imparted to the human person by Christianity, the understanding of the nature of man and of the human good that informs liberalism's political morality is decisively shaped by its conception of reason—a conception deriving from Enlightenment rationalism with its *esprit géométrique*. This conception of reason issues both in a naturalism that rejects any reality transcending the physical universe and in the denial of any order of human ends obliging us independently of our consent. The result is ultimately a conception of a universe stripped of meaning except that which the individual chooses to

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give to it by his sovereign will. It is this vision of man and the universe that elevates choice to the status of the human good and thus creates the utterly voluntarist conception of social relations in liberalism's theory of politics.

Unfortunately, with only rare exception, these essays fail to pursue their analysis past political institutions and principles to metaphysics and theology. As a result, far from bringing the two traditions into conversation, they ultimately fail to come to grips with either of the two traditions and so bypass the real issues of their longstanding conflict.

On a deeper level, however, the disappointment of this volume is a necessary result of the intellectual project it proposes. It is easy to see why this project might appear attractive. It would resolve America's culture wars and rescue us from the morass of the procedural republic. It would end the long-standing conflict between Catholicism and the modern world. It would facilitate the quest by certain American Catholic intellectuals for full acceptance by contemporary America's cultural elites. And, inasmuch as the type of wholesale change in the Church's social teaching required to secure its convergence with liberalism would necessitate a fundamental change in the Catholic understanding of man and the human good, it would open the door to the change in the Church's magisterium for which many clamor. (The latter prospect is greeted by several contributors with scarcely disguised glee.)

And the intellectual project does possess a certain superficial plausibility. Not only would the Church's embrace of the free society seem to open the door to an embrace of the liberal model of man and society, but, inasmuch as it is widely believed that liberalism provides the essential intellectual foundation of the free society, it would seem even to entail such an embrace.

The project rests, however, on a series of untenable assumptions. It assumes, first, that such traditions can change in the sense of "redefining rather fundamentally what they stand for," and that the two traditions here have so changed. On the contrary, an essential feature of an intellectual tradition as such is the presence of a shared body of core commitments that endure over time. Despite their many differences, we can speak of Locke, Kant, Mill, Dewey, and Rawls as representatives of a single intellectual tradition, of liberalism, because their work is informed by such a body of core commitments. A tradition may develop (in the sense explored by Newman), but it cannot undergo the fundamental changes attributed to the two traditions here. Indeed, the fact that we can still speak meaningfully of a Catholic or liberal intellectual tradition indicates that neither has undergone a fundamental change.

Secondly, the project assumes that Catholic social teaching has in recent decades developed toward a convergence with liberalism. But this convergence is more apparent than real. The free society is not a univocal concept; indeed, there exist a number of different theories of the free society with divergent understandings of politics and disparate conceptions of the nature of man. Although superficially similar in their institutions and practices, the versions of the free society engendered by these conflicting theories differ markedly in spirit and substance. A principled commitment to the free society does not entail an embrace of the liberal model of man and society.

The Catholic human rights revolution offers a model of the free society that differs dramatically from the model championed by liberal-

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ism. One need only imagine how the spirit and substance of a society animated by John Paul II's social vision would differ from one animated by the vision of Locke, Dewey, or Dworkin. Indeed, the issue that divides Catholicism and liberalism today at the level of political theory is nothing less than the spiritual substance of the free society.

The question of religious liberty provides an apt illustration. Although both Catholicism and liberalism embrace the principle of religious freedom, they disagree fundamentally about the foundation, nature, and implications of this principle. The affirmation of religious freedom does not entail the embrace of the liberal understanding of that principle; and the agreement between the two traditions on this subject is apparent rather than real.

FINALLY, the intellectual project of *Catholicism and Liberalism* assumes that the sort of convergence it envisions between Catholicism and liberalism is possible. Had this volume pursued its analysis of these two traditions to the point where their constitutive commitments were identified, the ultimate impossibility of the rapprochement between their political theories that the book is designed to effect would have become apparent. Catholicism and liberalism cannot and will not converge in their understanding of the defining principles—the spiritual substance—of the good society, for the simple reason that they are animated by conflicting and irreconcilable conceptions of the nature and destiny of man. The sort of convergence envisioned here would necessarily involve the sacrifice of the integrity of one or both of the traditions.

In the final analysis, the project proposed in this volume can only distract attention and divert efforts from the real intellectual project that confronts Catholic social thinkers on the eve of Christianity's third millennium. This project is the systematic elaboration of the theory of politics that informs the Catholic human rights revolution. This project will require the sort of deep knowledge and profound love of the Catholic tradition exhibited by thinkers like Maritain and Murray, the type of serious engagement with conciliar and papal social teaching rarely found in this volume, and a conversation with liberalism in which the desire for a rapprochement between the two traditions is not allowed to obscure the fundamental differences at the heart of their ongoing conflict.

In contrast to the one proposed in this volume, such a project would be an important step toward ending American Catholicism's post-conciliar pattern of abject capitulation to American culture. And in the area of social and political theory at least, it would mark a step toward the sort of serious engagement with that culture called for by Vatican II. By providing a real alternative to an intellectually moribund and morally bankrupt liberalism, this project might, in the long run, accomplish what a futile effort to secure a rapprochement with this liberalism could never achieve: the revitalization of America's democratic experiment.

BRIEFLY NOTED

A NATION UNDER LAWYERS. By MARY ANN GLENDON. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 331 pp. $24.*

In a witty and readable blend of anecdote and analysis—a portion of which appeared in FIRST THINGS ("Legal Ethics—Worlds in Collision," March 1994)—Mary Ann Glendon, the Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard University, examines the adversarial practice of law in America today. And, thereby, she uncovers the ways in which lawyers have both fed and fed upon the convulsions in American culture since the 1950s. The mutation of the practice of law, Professor Glendon argues, originates as much in the sociology of the legal profession as in the activism of the courts. Though changes in legal interpretation since the Warren Court have been significant, changes in legal procedure have been equally and perhaps more significant. Lawyers have found their antique practices, their ethical underpinnings, and their guild courtesies collapse under the pressures of overburdened court dockets, big-money clients, and the advanced, post-Marxist, anti-procedural theory emanating from the law schools. In itself, this is not surprising; the changes overtaking lawyers are the changes overtaking us all. But the legal profession is more than a synecdoche for the general culture; lawyers and what lawyers do have enormous importance for a nation that has undertaken to live under the rule of law. Professor Glendon has written a book that is deeply conservative—conservative in the highest sense of the word—for *A Nation Under Lawyers* is neither an abstract treatise about conservative theory nor a curmudgeonly mewl about the good old days. It is rather a reasoned, accessible argument that tradition—especially a tradition as rich as the American development of English Common Law—offers us resources for reclaiming a lost but vital portion of American culture.

DISCIPLES AND DEMOCRACIES: RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN POLITICS. Edited by MICHAEL CROMARTIE. *Ethics and Public Policy Center/Eerdmans. 147 pp. $12.99 paper.*

In 1993, the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. brought together a panel of scholars, journalists, and activists—many of whom have written for FIRST THINGS—to analyze the election of President Clinton and the future of the religious right. Responses and roundtable discussions followed papers presented by Ralph Reed, John Green, and George Weigel, and this volume gathers them all together in a well-organized form. Mr. Reed en-

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deavors to define exactly what religious conservatives want from politicians. Mr. Green demonstrates, by the statistics he and his colleagues gathered after the 1992 election, the solidarity of the religious right. Mr. Weigel, in the collection's finest piece, considers the place of biblical rhetoric in a secular democracy. Irving Kristol provides a fascinating introduction, and the responses and discussions following the papers clarify the situation of the religious right—though obviously, after the 1994 election, some of the more immediately topical material is outdated.

Goddess: Myths of the Female Divine. By David Leeming and Jake Page. *Oxford University Press. 189 pp. $22.*

In an attempt to cash in on the pseudo-mysticism craze rampant in some branches of feminism, the two male authors (and Oxford University Press) filch from a wide variety of religious documents seventy-five stories about the relation of females and the divine—and thereby manage to blaspheme against the religions of almost everyone, from Catholics to Hindus to Navahos to Jews. The extraordinary thing about the book, however, is not how blasphemous but how dated it all seems. The authors organize the stories in a "historically correct" narrative in which they hope, by a sort of osmosis, one of Carl Jung's archetypes will emerge—though it must be twenty years since anyone besides Joseph Campbell thought that simple juxtaposition of various cultures' stories would produce a Jungian archetype. Equally outdated is the authors' wonderfully naive assumption that all religions must be saying much the same thing. But, of course, if we rip all their stories out of context, carefully ignore their distinctions, and forcefully eradicate their particularity, it does turn out that all religions are saying much the same thing, or at least much the same nothing.

Ethics After Christendom. By Vigen Guroian. *Eerdmans. 206 pp. $12.99 paper.*

With fascinating analyses of Orthodox liturgies and practices, Guroian argues for the *specificity* of ecclesial ethics—for the specific insights into the knotty ethical problems of the family, ecology, and euthanasia that the liturgical structure of the Church can give us. The care with which it engages contemporary Protestant and Catholic authors, and the learning with which it draws upon the rich traditions of Orthodox theology and ecclesiology, make this attempt to describe a sacramental and churchly ethics a worthy read. The book is much too quick, however, to accept the end of Judeo-Christian culture, and Guroian seems to write in part out of a misplaced sense of inferiority—as though he thinks that he can make us discover the resources of his Armenian and Orthodox traditions only if we have already lost all of our own religious and ethical traditions.

Liberalism at the Crossroads. Edited by Christopher Wolfe and John Hittinger. *Rowman and Littlefield. $19.95 paper.*

You can't tell the players without a scorecard, but the task of providing a scorecard of the players in a contemporary intellectual field is typically thankless. Mr. Wolfe and Mr. Hittinger, however, deserve enormous thanks for collecting these essays that sort out and present in brief, intelligible compass the political theories of the major writers in the field: Rawls, Dworkin, Nozick, MacIntyre, Unger, Rorty, et al. Both conservatives and radicals have in many ways turned against liberalism in contemporary politics. And both traditionalists and postmodernists have in many ways turned against liberalism in contemporary philosophy. But liberalism still remains at the center of all our thought about political theory, and around liberalism the concerns, interests, and arguments of all our political theorists still turn. This book provides a clear introduction to the state of contemporary political theory: both why liberalism is in crisis and what defenses remain to it.

The Feminist Question. By Francis Martin. *Eerdmans. 461 pp. $29.95 paper.*

A serious theologian makes a valiant attempt to find something of profundity in feminist theology. The author is right that those who simply dismiss the feminist theologians may be missing something: good minds, even when working in a silly and fashionable ideology, are bound to make a good observation from time to time. And, as Francis Martin shows, there is a good mind or two at work in feminist theology. But as he works his way through the assertions of the feminists he finds at last that their presuppositions are not theological. Theology, in feminist hands, is a tool for advancing a political and social agenda. The fact remains that the roles available for women in the history of the church have not always been appropriate, and the fact remains that a minor poetic tradition of using feminine attributes to speak of God has not until recently been investigated. But Martin shows that these facts are insufficient to ground an alternative to traditional theology, just as they are insufficient to provide a reason for overturning all of Christian thought. The only reason for doing *that* would be to advance a feminist agenda entirely at odds with the reason for doing theology in the first place.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Clearing the Mind of Cant

With the enormous attention paid *The Bell Curve*, the book by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray that is inevitably described as "controversial" (or worse), another book appearing about the same time, and addressing some of the same questions, went almost unnoticed. It is a shame, because Thomas Sowell's *Race and Culture: A World View* (Basic Books) is an invaluable resource in a time such as ours when very basic questions are being asked about the limits of human behavior and the ethics of social policy. Sowell, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, is a prolific author and columnist. *Race and Culture* is not merely another of his always suggestive publications, but a summing up of what he has learned from many years of examining human behavior in cultural contexts as various as Los Angeles, Sri Lanka, and remote islands of the South Pacific. It warrants the subtitle "a worldview" by virtue of both global scope and the range of questions addressed.

Why is it that some groups "succeed" and others don't? Sowell is impatient with intellectual complexifiers of what is meant by success. To succeed, in his view, is to make your way economically, to build a solid material base on which life is stable and pleasant enough to afford the luxury of indulging other interesting concerns, including, if one is so inclined, the question of what it means to succeed. Sowell's argument is that some cultures do and some cultures do not support the values, dispositions, and character traits that, everywhere and always, have produced material success. Backing up the argument with a stunning array of historical illustrations, he shows that hard work, an ability to organize others, a gift for rational thinking, and an eagerness to learn from "superior" cultures are among the characteristics essential to material success.

Sowell is, to say the least, not intimidated by "multiculturalists" who insist that all cultures are equal—or, more frequently, imply that all cultures are equal except their own, which is inferior. He writes: "Plain and obvious as cultural differences in effectiveness in different fields should be, there has developed in recent times a reluctance or a squeamishness about discussing it, and some use the concept of 'cultural relativism' to deny it. After archaeology and anthropology have revealed the cultural achievements of some groups once dismissed as 'primitive,' and especially after the ravages of racism shocked the world when the Nazi death camps were exposed at the end of World War II, there has been an understandable revulsion at the idea of labeling any peoples or cultures 'superior' or 'inferior.' Yet Arabic numerals are not merely *different* from Roman numerals; they are *superior* to Roman numerals. Their superiority is evidenced by their worldwide acceptance, even in civilizations that derive from Rome.

"It is hard to imagine the distances encountered in astronomy, or the complexities of advanced mathematics, being expressed in Roman numerals, when even expressing the year of American independence—MDCCLXXVI—takes up more than twice the space required by Arabic numerals, and offers far more opportunities for errors, because a compound Roman numeral either adds or subtracts individual numbers according to their place in the sequence. The Roman numbering system also lacked a zero, a defect of some importance to mathematicians. Numbers systems do not exist in a vacuum or as mere badges of cultural identity. They exist to facilitate mathematical analysis—and some systems facilitate it better than others."

Some things work, and some things don't. And if one culture facilitates the doing of things worth doing better than another culture, hurray for the culture that works, and (sotto voce) too bad for the

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culture that doesn't. In the real world of Thomas Sowell, inequality is the name of history's game, and we should not let sentimentality about "cultural identity," "roots," and "self-esteem" obscure that fact. Sowell does not view it as a brutal fact, since, all in all, the historical contest between unequal persons and peoples is the stuff of progress. Along the way, there are indeed brutalities, and we have to live with that. About some of the great wrongs of the past, there is very little that we can do, and only great mischief results from trying to redo the consequences of contests past. The following gives the flavor of Sowell's determinedly unsentimental thinking:

"It is difficult to survey the history of racial or ethnic relations without being appalled by the inhumanity, brutality, and viciousness of it all. There is no more humane or moral wish than the wish that this could all be set right somehow. But there are no more futile or dangerous efforts than attempts to redress the wrongs of history. These wrongs are not to be denied. Wrongs in fact constitute a major part of history, in countries around the world. But while the victims of these wrongs may live on forever as symbols, most have long ago died as flesh-and-blood human beings. So have their persecutors, who are as much beyond the reach of our vengeance as the victims are beyond our help. This may be frustrating and galling, but that is no justification for taking out those frustrations on living human beings—or for generating new strife by creating privileges for those who are contemporary reminders of historical guilt.

"After territorial irredentism has led nations to slaughter each other's people over land with virtually no value in itself, merely because it once belonged in a different political jurisdiction at a time before any living person's memory, what is to be expected from instilling the idea of *social* irredentism, growing out of historical wrongs? What can any society hope to gain by having some babies in that society born into the world with a priori grievances against other babies born into that same society on the same day?

"The biological or cultural continuity of a people does not make guilt inheritable. Nor can the particular economic and social consequences of particular past actions necessarily be isolated or quantified in the lives of contemporaries—not when innumerable other influences have intervened in the meantime. Moreover, no group was a tabula rasa to begin with. Yet a vast literature in many countries confidently attributes intergroup economic 'gaps' or statistical disparities in occupational 'representation' to particular historical evils, often with little or no examination of the specifics of history, or of contemporary demographic, cultural, or other differences. In keeping with this approach, statistical theories of random events are often applied to group differences, not only in intellectual speculation but also in courts of law—as if people were random events, rather than members of groups with pronounced, enduring, and highly disparate cultural patterns."

What Ought To Be

"What can any society hope to gain by having some babies in that society born into the world with a priori grievances against other babies born into that same society on the same day?" The question is a forceful challenge to schemes of affirmative action, quotas, and other policy devices premised upon "social irredentism." Yet policy might—and most of us would argue that it should—take into account that one baby has severely limited life prospects, while others are greatly favored. One baby's deprivation is not caused by the better fortune of the other babies, and there is therefore no question of its having a grievance against the others, but there is surely an obligation to do what can be done to improve its life chances. This is the other side of Sowell's bracingly realistic critique of efforts to "redress the wrongs of history." It is the side that tends to be neglected in *Race and Culture.*

This is not to fault Mr. Sowell for lacking that great liberal virtue called compassion, a virtue that no longer covers many sins. But one is mindful of Eliot's observation that "Human kind cannot bear very much reality." The realism of *Race and Culture,* while offering a convincing description of the world as it really is, shortchanges something that a more comprehensive realism (dare one say a more realistic realism?) takes into account: humanity's unstoppable penchant for challenging what is with what ought to be. Of course that penchant has at times miscarried, producing utopian projects both sentimental and totalitarian, but it is also a part of culture, of moral culture, that is slighted in what is meant by culture in *Race and Culture.*

Nonetheless, this is a book to be read and read carefully. It is packed with information and analysis in support of positions incorrect and unfashionable. Thomas Sowell is a great believer in Dr. Johnson's maxim, "Clear your mind of cant." He is also a bit of a contrarian, which is perhaps understandable in one who has for years been berated by establishmentarian writers, both black and white, as a traitor to his race. "Sowell lacks soul," as one critic so very cleverly puts it. The truth is that Thomas Sowell looks unblinkingly at some unbending, and often unpleasant, facts about the world, and he would not serve us better if his eyes teared up more often; that would only blur his vision, and ours. *Race and Culture* puts one in mind of Edward Banfield's *The Unheavenly City* (1968), and that is intended as high praise. Both authors argue forcefully that our political culture has overdosed on the cant of compassion and equality. Both rub the reader's nose

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in powerful evidence that some social problems may be intractable. In some instances, it may be that the best we can do is not make them worse. There is much to be said that thinkers such as Sowell and Banfield do not say. But people who want to be taken seriously on the subject of changing the world for the better are well advised to attend closely to what they do say.

FT

PLURALISM THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The still new (and maybe the last) president of the Public Broadcasting Service, Ervin Duggan, spoke at the fall convocation of his alma mater, the distinguished Davidson College in Davidson, North Carolina. He underscored the irreplaceable importance of competence, courage, and commitment. The following is under the rubric of commitment: "When I was at Davidson in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this institution was already beginning its flight from what we believed to be the pinching, limiting strictures of its Calvinist past. Most of us as students, and many bright, promising faculty members, believed that the old churchy ways of Davidson—its remaining ties to its Presbyterian heritage, its quaint belief that religious faith could be a path to Truth—were not only anachronistic, but also incompatible with free inquiry.

"We wanted Davidson to shed its parochialism, its starchy, teetotaling Calvinism. We couldn't wait for Davidson to free itself from the embarrassing, suffocating embrace of its church relationship; to liberate itself from the antiquated notion that Truth could be validly interpreted through a lens called Faith. We wanted Davidson to be a national institution; to hold its head up in the secular and pluralistic world of true higher education, not kneel with bowed head, mumbling by rote the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

"It was only years later that I came to understand that I had been wrong, dead wrong, about pluralism. Pluralism does not mean becoming like everybody else. Pluralism is about differences; pluralism is about robust assertions of one's distinctive background and beliefs. Genuine pluralism does not ask people, or institutions, to suppress their individuality or their convictions so that they blend invisibly into the whole; rather, it encourages a rich mix of individualities. The old Calvinist Davidson, however much I might have deplored it, was making a genuine contribution to pluralism by insisting on being different; by refusing to be all things to all people.

"It was years later before I understood that Davidson, by asserting the authenticity of religious Truth—of Christian Truth—was asserting something profoundly important: the validity of a religious way of knowing. Davidson College did not reject the scientific way of knowing and interpreting the material world; that is how Davidson turned out future physicians and scientists. Davidson accepted, as well, the validity of an aesthetic way of knowing; that is why it built fine arts buildings and encouraged oboists to practice, out under the trees. But Davidson also asserted the validity, alongside these other valid ways of knowing, of a religious way of knowing: a way to Truth that leads along a lighted path called Faith.

"Only years after leaving this place did I realize that the religious tradition honored by those starchy old Calvinists was what brought into being many of the things I cherished most. The teaching that all persons are created in the image of God, for example: that religious idea gives the only transcendent depth and meaning to our notions of human rights, of human beings as sacred. The ancient doctrine of Original Sin, for example: it led James Madison and John Adams to insist upon limitations on power, upon a system of checks and balances. The Judeo-Christian idea of covenantal laws and relationships, for example: this led, in time, to modern democratic constitutions and Bills of Rights. Indeed, our modern ideas of tolerance and pluralism owe much to great assertions of human universality like that of St. Paul: 'I am persuaded that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek. . . .'

"It was years before I realized that this valid religious way of knowing—a way of knowing which gave us the Sistine Madonna of Raphael, the Divine Comedy of Dante, and the St. Matthew Passion of Bach—was not an embarrassing artifact of small-minded Calvinists. No, it was instead a kind of glory: a glory worth defending and cherishing; a glory, yes, worthy of handing down from generation to generation."

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THE PERFECTLY REVISED VERSION

The New Revised Standard Version, the New New Revised Standard Version, The New Revised American Version, and on and on. It started five decades ago, and it seems, as the Preacher might

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have said, "Of the multiplication of Bible translations there is no end." Of course the publishing houses make a lot of money from this, and there are Bible translation committees and individual Bible translators who might otherwise have nothing to do with their time. But what purpose is served? Among others, the unholy purpose of destroying a common biblical vocabulary. It's a Catholic problem as much as a Protestant one. The missalettes used in most parishes (missalettes for Christianettes?) even have different translations for the same passages used in the same Mass. (For instance, psalm antiphons frequently differ from the same passage in the psalm itself.) Most Christians under thirty no longer have in common a reservoir of biblical texts recognized by all, and are likely unable to recognize the biblical allusions woven throughout our English literary history. In addition, with few exceptions, the new translations represent a dismal declension from any understanding of elevated, even attractive, language. Way on back in the 1950s when J. B. Phillips was publishing parts of the New Testament in everyday language, it was exciting stuff, precisely because we had a standard translation with which to compare it. Now all most folk have is a cacophony of everyday languages descending into ever deeper everydayness.

You know we wouldn't bring the problem up unless we had a solution. The solution is simple: For all public purposes, liturgical and catechetical, only the Revised Standard Version may be used. Now if only we could find some authority that could effectively implement such a rule. Alas, the Bible translators you have always with you, and, to make matters worse, they are now in cahoots with sundry ideologues who are eager to put feminist, liberationist, or other spins on the text. Where will it all end up? Christopher Seitz, Professor of Old Testament at Yale Divinity School, has sent us a sampling of what he thinks the future might have in store for us. This is an excerpt from the Perfectly Revised Version (PRV):

1. *Bereshith adam*. In the beginning, Humankind. Humankind reflected on itself and saw that humankind was very good, neither male nor female. Humankind rested after reflecting.

2. Humankind spoke and marvelled on the word, which showed perfectly what humankind felt. The word did not last forever, and humankind reflected on time. *Bereshith* now meant something, though beginning and ending were abstractions. All time was one, as *adam* was one. "Day" two.

3. Seeing the power of the word to be other but to include all, humankind divided itself into two creatures, "she" and "he," "male" and "female." These two joined themselves on occasion back into the original one, and new life came forth, of one type or the other. And all three saw that they were good, diverse yet the same. "Day" three.

4. And humankind said, let us make God in our image, in the likeness of our threeness we will make God. Sometimes male, sometimes female, sometimes Godself, always our creation. And God was formed by the word. And humankind saw Godself. While not "very good," Godself was "good." "Day" four.

5. And humankind saw the world that had always been, with stars, and sun, and day and night, and animals, and plants, and now also with God, and humankind said, We shall launch forth and explore. And laws were formed so that all would be equitably shared. The God they had made was put in charge of these laws, so that if they were broken, Godself would be judge. And humankind saw that this arrangement was good. "Day" five.

6. Humankind was very fruitful and multiplied and covered the earth. When laws were broken through inequitable sharing, God's justice was called into question. God sent Godself to rectify the sharing, even to the extent of becoming *adam* through perfect obedience. But it was one against many, and the many knew God was not *adam*, but the work of humankind's own hands. "Day" six.

7. And humankind said, We are sorry we made God. A void is felt among us. So God was taken back into humankind from whence God came. And humankind set about to perfect the system of laws, so that humankind could remain very good and enjoy life forever and ever. And this just striving was the word and the word was with humankind and the word was humankind. And the word became the Perfectly Revised Version, which you are hearing this day. And humankind rested from all humankind's labors.

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Economics in Verse and Prose

Christian thinkers who propose correspondences between Christian morality and democratic capitalism are frequently challenged by others who

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contend that biblical ethics requires a "radical alternative" to the market economy. More often than not the challenge is from the left, but things are not always so simple. For instance, among Catholic challengers are many who are much taken with the ideal of "distributism" espoused by G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Distributism is favored by, among others, the *New Oxford Review*, which prompted James K. Fitzpatrick to a response in that magazine's letters column: "Whenever I read Chesterton and Belloc, the imagery captures my imagination: small villages, self-employed craftsmen, religious schools, social life revolving around the local parsonage, evenings with a pint of ale in a cheery pub. And then I come back to earth. The goal of distributists is to use the state to limit unjust concentrations of wealth; their objective is to use the law to set the framework for a less materialist society, one where home and hearth and family count for more than the lounge-lizard life of the [Donald] Trumps and certain stock market gurus. Well, it sounds great, but, who is going to be in charge of all this social engineering? Who is going to define what it means to be 'excessively' materialist?"

Fitzpatrick recounts a conversation with a monsignor who advocated a system that would assure a "living wage" that enables a man to support his family "in dignity." When this monsignor of a suburban parish got to listing the things required for dignity (good house, reliable car, college education for the kids, retirement savings, and so forth), it added up to an income of well over $100,000 per year, pretty much what his parishioners were working for in this despised "capitalistic system." Fitzpatrick concludes: "Chesterton and Belloc remain favorites of mine. They are writers of great importance, as are the Southern Agrarians in our country who viewed society from a similar perspective. But what they offer on these issues is closer to verse than prose. Their essays provide an antidote to the preoccupation with money that can overtake us in capitalist societies. They provide perspective on what monied interests can do to the political process. All of that is to be commended, without reservation. But after that? From where I sit, there simply are no position papers for the candidates for public office to be found in their pages."

Of course our society is riddled with dreadful problems, but it is a sloppy and widespread habit of mind that blames the failings of this or any other social order on "capitalism." Some problems can be ameliorated by political or economic changes, although every proposal for change is afflicted by the law of unintended consequences. Today it would seem that there are no alternatives to the market economy. Nor, if we have a thoughtful appreciation of the productive benefits and the virtues attending the market economy, need we be urgently seeking alternatives. What we should be seeking is not an alternative to capitalism but better ways to include everybody in the benefits and virtues of what the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* calls "the circle of productivity and exchange." Even when that is done better than it is now, however, there will still be dreadful problems that are endemic to the human condition.

The beginning of wisdom about politics includes agreement with Dr. Johnson: "How small, of all that human hearts endure,/That part which laws or kings can cause or cure./Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,/Our own felicity we make or find." The wisdom applies equally to fiddling with economic systems or fantasies. Actually, while politics and economics can do little to cure human misery, they can do a great deal to cause it. As witness the doleful history of those societies that have been mobilized to establish "radical alternatives" to freedom.

FT

BUT TO BE FAIR . . .

Once again the irresistible penchant to be fair gets the better of us. The proponents of distributism would understandably cry foul if we left the description of that ideal to someone who thinks it is but fetching poesy. So here is Dermot Quinn, Professor of History at Seton Hall University, on "Distributism, Democratic Capitalism, and the New World Order." It appears in a special issue of the *Chesterton Review* that contains a number of papers given at a conference in Croatia in which American and English Catholics cautioned formerly Communist societies against adopting the model of democratic capitalism allegedly espoused by certain American neoconservatives.

No one, writes Professor Quinn, has described the distributist ideal "with greater wit or lucidity" than Chesterton himself. Here is himself's description of what he wanted: "The truth is this; and it is extremely, even excruciatingly simple. Either Private Property is good for Man or it is bad for Man. If it is bad, let us all immediately become honest and courageous Communists. . . . But if it is good for Man it is good for Everyman. There is a case for Capitalism; a case for Landlordism; a case for complete Despotism; . . . there are arguments for Trusts, for Squires, for big employers. But they are all arguments *against* Private Property. They are all more or less philosophical reasons why a man, as such, should not be an owner, as such; why the tenant should *not* own his house; why the workman should *not* own his workshop; why the farmer

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should *not* own his farm. The moment Private Property becomes a privilege, it ceases to be private property. . . . But [distributists] are not ashamed of private property; for we would give it to everyone."

Quinn defends distributism against the charge that it is a form of cultural fetishism and nostalgia. "According to critics, distributism was compounded of nostalgia and a sort of *sancta simplicitas*. It attached undue moral significance to objects or styles. It was inverted snobbery. It was a creed of cranks. There is an element of truth here: some distributists were faddists, pure and simple. What of it? The criticism misses the point. Distributism was radical, but not egregious. The standard complaint—it was rural, backward, *poujadiste*—is caricature. In fact, it was not anti-industrial or opposed to machines. Rather, it had more to say about ownership itself than about any particular form of economic activity. 'Even while we remain industrial,' Chesterton remarked, 'we can work towards industrial distribution and away from industrial monopoly. . . . Even while we are the workshop of the world, we can try to own our tools.' Here was no machine-wrecking, no horrified flight to the land. Monopoly more than industrialism was the target. Indeed, because distributists celebrated variety and heterogeneity, they did *not* envision a world entirely of small farmers or shopkeepers. The absurdity of 'mathematically equal sub-division of property or the imposition from above of universal one-man independence' held no charm. Self-sufficiency—call it economic freedom—was the goal. The form of that freedom was a matter of choice."

Against the ravages of consumerist capitalism, Quinn posits his vision of a better world. "Distributism offers more coherent discernment: a regime of small ownerships and local attachments, a creed of property but not possessiveness. Central to it is a nation of life in community, whether in the town or the family farm or the parish or the religious order: human organizations with a soul. The rootlessness of city or suburb, however affluent, holds no appeal. And it is precisely modest proprietorship which permits individual independence while preserving social responsibility. Owning one's own land, one's shop; practicing a trade or a skill; sharing profit or loss with one's fellow workers: these were the distributist ideals." Professor Quinn concludes with this: "'Our business is business,' claimed [Calvin] Coolidge. 'What,' he seems to demand of the distributist, 'is yours?' Quietly, and with no great claim to originality, the distributist answers: 'Our business is the business of life itself.'" Quietly, and with no claim at all to originality (for Mr. Fitzpatrick and many others have asked it before), one asks, And what policies or platform do you propose to advance that worthy end?

The conclusion, no matter how fair one strives to be, is that distributism is poetry and preachment. It is in some respects necessary poetry and preachment, for in a sinful world people need always to be recalled to community, to self-reliance, to neighborliness, and all that constitutes what Russell Kirk called "the permanent things." But until the distributist "ideal" engages the structures and practices of the world of economics daily chronicled by, say, the *Wall Street Journal*, it cannot help but seem vacuous and naive. It seems particularly imprudent for Catholic intellectuals to tie the Church's social teaching to the shadow of an economic idea that, in the view of some thoughtful people, once held out hope for a "third way" beyond capitalism and socialism. With the end of socialism, dreams of a third way are irrelevant. As John Paul II makes explicitly clear in section 42 of *Centesimus Annus*, the choice today is between acceptable and unacceptable forms of capitalism.

Another contributor to the special issue of the *Chesterton Review*, David Schindler, says he resents the charge that his alternative to capitalism is "unrealistic." Christians who honor the martyrs, he writes, do not have "success" as their goal, and he is certainly right about that. Christian martyrs, however, are prepared to die for Christ, not for a dispute over an economic theory that is now chiefly of antiquarian interest. Anyway, nobody to date seems to have suffered much as a consequence of attacking the neoconservative proponents of democratic capitalism—unless one counts lost credibility and poetry diminished by self-dramatization. Chesterton, to his great credit, took himself ever so much less seriously. Which is one reason why he will be celebrated long after everybody has forgotten the wan attempt by some of his devoted disciples to rescue his unfortunate foray into economic theorizing from the past to which it belongs. Were he around today, one expects he might—with his accustomed wit and lucidity, and, above all, charity—try to dissuade his disciples from persisting in that attempt.

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Back to the Fifties?

When Nations Die is a book by Jim Nelson Black that is just out from Tyndale. The subtitle is *America on the Brink: Ten Warning Signs of a Culture in Crisis*, so you can sense right off that the author is not the bearer of unqualifiedly good news. He concludes with a testimony by Chief Justice Earl Warren at a Washington prayer breakfast in 1954. Warren said: "I believe no one can read the history of

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our country without realizing that the Good Book and the spirit of the Savior have from the beginning been our guiding geniuses. . . . Whether we look to the first charter of Virginia . . . or to the Charter of New England . . . or to the Charter of Massachusetts Bay . . . or to the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut . . . the same objective is present: a Christian land governed by Christian principles. . . . I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it: freedom of belief, of expression, of assembly, of petition, the dignity of the individual, the sanctity of the home, equal justice under law, and the reservation of powers to the people. . . . I like to believe we are living today in the spirit of the Christian religion. I like also to believe that as long as we do so, no great harm can come to our country."

That got us to thinking about an acquaintance, not an unsophisticated fellow, who sums up his conservatism in one simple command, "Back to the Fifties!" For a number of reasons we find that formulation unpersuasive, not least because of the shoddy mix of religion and Americanism so common to that era. Admittedly, it may be too much to expect politicians and jurists to be theologically literate, but the sentimental and smug conflation of Christianity and the American Way got way out of hand back then. For everything there is a season. Forty-plus years later, some may think that talk about "a Christian land governed by Christian principles" sounds pretty good compared with the anti-American and anti-Christian rhetoric that has gained ascendancy since the countercultural assault of the sixties. But, at the risk of repeating ourselves, the choice is not between a sacred public square and a naked public square. The goal is a civil public square in which the convictions, including the religiously grounded convictions, of a democratic people are engaged in deliberating how we ought to order our life together. In a nation "under God"—which means, first of all, under judgment—that deliberation is conducted in the awareness that we must never presume that "we are living today in the spirit of the Christian religion" or that because of our righteousness "no great harm can come to our country." Then of course there is the fact that Chief Justice Earl Warren, together with other justices, declared it an unconstitutional establishment of religion for the public schools to teach children what he in 1954 declared to be the foundational truths of the republic. Warren and his brethren said, in effect, that no one can read what he says is the history of our country, at least in the public school, without violating the Constitution. From such incoherence, great harm has in fact come to our country.

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AMERICA'S SPIRITUAL NORAD

Focus on the Family is but the largest of dozens of national Christian organizations that have relocated in Colorado Springs. Marc Cooper, who styles himself a radical reporter, has some cautionary words for the readers of the very leftward *Nation* magazine: "But over the last handful of years, Colorado Springs has become the new capital and staging ground for America's Christian Right. More than seventy evangelical and para-church groups—ranging from small oddities like the Fellowship of Christian Cowboys to midsize operations like Every Home For Christ to the mammoth multinational of conservative Christian activism, Focus on the Family—have been lured to set up their headquarters here. The concentration of all these groups with their 2,500 employees plus family members has given the Christian right enormous influence in Colorado Springs, and has consequently endowed the city with disproportionate clout with the national Christian conservative movement. No wonder Focus on the Family leader Dr. James Dobson declared Colorado Springs to be the 'Gettysburg' of America's culture war. What's happening in Colorado Springs is more complicated and more portentous then just a freakish case of a small minority coalescing in a political critical mass. For too long now the secular left has mistakenly written off Christian conservatives as a radical fringe skilled in stealth politics who, when exposed to the light of scrutiny, shrivel and dissipate. I would argue, especially in the wake of the November 8 vote, that as nary a populist can now be found on the left (save Ralph Nader and Jesse Jackson), as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s yearning for the 'beloved community' has been supplanted by liberals calling for boot camps and public executions, and as the Democrats in general deteriorate into the Republicans' caricature of a party of lobbyists and lawyers in tasseled loafers, it is the Christian right that has best taken up the challenge to fill the growing emptiness in American life, to soothe the fears and uncertainties provoked by the global market, the darling of both parties. I am not suggesting that the radical right is any less radical or right than progressives have always claimed. I'm merely arguing that in the desert landscape of American politics, the radical right position is increasingly becoming less extremist and more mainstream. Its success in Colorado Springs is particularly worrisome because this is a city of the future, not the past. With plentiful high-tech, nonunion jobs, 'good schools,' and a relatively low crime rate, Colorado Springs is exactly the sort of midsize, semi-rural city that tops the relocation list

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of millions of disaffected blue- and white-collar workers eager to flee their decaying big cities or suburbs and start a new life."

A local fundamentalist pastor, Pastor Jim, with whom Cooper talks, is overwhelmed by the growth of his own church and almost everything else in Colorado Springs that does business under the banner of Bible-believing Christianity. "God himself," says the pastor, "has raised Colorado Springs to be a strategic center for our nation. . . . Colorado Springs is America's spiritual NORAD. By the year 2000 this chapel could be one of the ten most influential churches in the country." Cooper concludes his not unsympathetic account with, "It would be silly to bet against Pastor Jim."

The words and mannerisms of the religiously fervent tend to seem fevered in the cold print of a magazine article, and it is all too easy to parody the hype that attends much evangelical entrepreneurship. Mr. Cooper does not take unfair advantage. Everything about Colorado Springs, not only its religiousness, is a reproach to the readers of the *Nation* in their "decaying big cities or suburbs." Those who live in this decaying big city—on the Upper West Side, Chelsea, and the Village—tell themselves that Colorado Springs represents everything that they came to New York to escape from. As a nearly incorrigible New York chauvinist, this writer is not untouched by that bias. In reality, however, Colorado Springs and other places to which "disaffected" Americans are fleeing to "start a new life" are not what we escaped from. They are something new. For some of us, they are nice places to visit, briefly. We have friends and colleagues there. But we wouldn't want to live there.

As historians have pointed out, great spiritual revivals of the past have mainly been urban phenomena. Can national spiritual renewal come from gated cities of refuge, connected to the rest of the world chiefly by fiber optics and satellite dishes? Once in the American story, the big city was the future; now it seems increasingly consigned to the past. Once it was the road to success; now it is the holding pen for society's losers. That's a bleak picture, and we should not accept it too readily. For millions of Americans, especially immigrants, the city is still the arena of seemingly unlimited possibility and promise. They, too, are very much part of the American future. There is nothing wrong with Colorado Springs as a high-tech center of communications and mass mailing, but the entrepreneurs of spiritual renewal must, if there is to be something like a national renewal, engage the decaying worlds that they fled. If they do not, the result is not a great awakening but a nation of people, from the Upper West Side to Colorado Springs, congratulating themselves on having escaped from one another.

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The Best of Possible Religions in the Best of Possible Worlds

An acquaintance with the conceits of times past can provide a measure of immunization against the conceits of our own time. The following is from the preface to the 1838 reprinting of the Coverdale Bible, first published in 1535. The author reflects with unqualified satisfaction on the happy history "to which we gratefully ascribe the establishment of our present national religion." (Meaning the Church of England.) "Accustomed in the present day to the highest degree of civil and religious liberty that man perhaps can ever expect to enjoy, free to express our opinions without the terrors of the stake or the tortures of the rack to awe us into silence, or force us into dissimulation, it is with a mixture of curiosity and indignant surprise that we cast back our glance over a space of centuries, and see our ancestors struggling in all the mazes of ignorance and the labyrinths of superstition, alike passive under the mental tyranny of their monkish rulers and the bodily servitude of their despotic Lords. But every thing in this world changes, and excessive tyranny only more effectually prepares the way for perfect freedom. The minds of men in some degree induced to reason by the measures of Henry the Eighth were no longer to be blinded by false pretenses or intimidated by impotent threats, and the commencement of the Reformation dawned steadily and beautifully through the mists of papistic craft that the mental sloth of ages had permitted to accumulate. It is difficult for us to imagine the despotic control at that time exercised over the whole faculties, whether physical or mental, of our ancestors, and it requires some effort to picture to ourselves the revivifying effect that must have attended the spreading of the reformed doctrines. Men, who had seldom exerted their reasoning powers, were at once invited to discuss theological difficulties, and to solve the deepest mysteries of religion: and as by the reformed tenets every matter was open for discussion, there were few bounds set to inquiry; but various tenets and various opinions were as quickly spread, as eagerly adopted. The light that thus broke through the mental darkness of the reign of Henry the Eighth, fed as it was by the Holy Word of God, burnt purely and steadily; and although adverse winds and hostile gusts shook its flame for a time during the reign of Mary, they could not extinguish it, but left it to throw its calm and heavenly rays on our own and future ages." It would perhaps be unkind to mention that all the elements are there for the making of what the national

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religion would become a century and a half later, so we won't mention it.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ We don't make these things up, you know. A history professor in New York remarked at lunch the other day on how very little he can take for granted with respect to what his students know. For instance, he accompanied a class on a tour of French cathedrals and art museums. After a week of this, one of the brightest young things in the class observed that they had been viewing all these paintings and statues of mothers with a child, and in every case the child was a boy. "How can anyone deny that that's not evidence of sexism?" she wanted to know.

■ Here's a big chart published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Judeo-Christian Sexual Ethics Through the Ages." A big subject requires a big chart. According to this chart, there were two important developments in sexual ethics prior to Christ, seven from the birth of Christ to the Year 1000, eleven from the beginning of the Second Millennium to 1900, and fifteen so far in this century. So you can see that history is really speeding up. Looked at from the truly big perspective of "through the ages," the first major development in the twentieth century was in 1939, "Birth of Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority." Other transformative events were Reform Jews approving ordination of gay rabbis (1990), a Catholic bishop resigning after an affair with a woman is exposed (1993), and the 1994 launching of a feminist organization to promote the goddess worship advocated by the 1993 "RE-Imagining" conference. In sum, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Judeo-Christian Sexual Ethics* for people who only have time to read the newspaper.

■ Last summer, the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* ran an article titled "Regulating Physician-Assisted Death." Getting implicit support from *NEJM* was a big score for the pro-euthanasia side. In a letter to the editor, Daniel Callahan of the Hastings Center, one of the foremost authorities on ethics related to death and dying, put the question into perspective: "First, the article fails to acknowledge the most difficult, indeed insuperable, regulatory problem: How would it be possible to monitor agreements and conversations between doctors and patients, given the privacy of the doctor-patient relationship? Are we to station a police officer at every bedside and in every doctor's office? The plan advanced in the article is, in effect, nothing other than a self-regulatory scheme, requiring that physicians voluntarily subject themselves to oversight; only at that point does the scheme kick into operation. Moreover, if the practice of physician-assisted suicide is already widespread but currently carried out with legal impunity, why should we expect doctors who now freely break the law to pay attention to new regulations any more than they do to the present one? If they now feel they can violate a long-standing moral prohibition in medicine to assist a suicide, why should we expect a sudden new respect for medical morality in the future? Second, the notion of 'independent and impartial oversight' of an issue as morally and emotionally volatile as this one would be merely amusing if the authors were not serious. Or maybe their plan shows that they really do have a sly sense of humor. Presumably, no physician or lay person opposed to physician-assisted suicide would be allowed to serve as a palliative-care consultant or be a member of the palliative-care committee. By definition, such people would lack the requisite impartiality, as would the many hospice workers who believe that pain and suffering can be relieved in all but the rarest cases and who claim never to have seen such cases anyway. In short, only those who passed an initial ideological test could be certified as independent and impartial. How convenient that would be. Third, the authors combine a liberal conception of who would be eligible for assistance with a view that the 'situation and values' of prospective candidates should be determinative. It is thus hard to see how any reasonably determined patient could fail to get what he or she wanted. Indeed, it would take an uncommonly dense patient not to be able to figure out how to play the game with such a system. The authors of this article have created a regulatory Potemkin village—all facade with nothing behind it." Callahan's argument echoes key points in last year's report by the New York State task force on law and ethics, the key point being that "regulating" doctor-assisted suicide is a charade, as Oregon's new law will likely demonstrate in short order, if the courts let it go into effect.

■ *A Christian's Guide to Worry-free Money Management* is a book just out from Zondervan. The suggestion that there is a specifically Christian way to do what comes naturally always raises a suspicion. The book has a chapter explaining why "Christians should practice tax avoidance—legally reducing taxes to the lowest possible amount." Uh huh. Those who need a Bible passage to justify acting upon God-given common sense will be pleased that the authors have one readily at hand. Tax avoidance, we are told, is biblically mandated by "Render unto Caesar . . ." Next: *A Christian's Guide to Coming In Out of the Rain.*

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■ Writing in the Phi Beta Kappa publication, the *Key Reporter,* John P. Burgess, Associate for Theology at the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church (USA), has this to say: "A Society like Phi Beta Kappa can help remind us of the role of traditions and communities of interpretation in safeguarding knowledge. At a time in which all traditions are fragile, we need more than a scholarship that shakes its own foundations. We also need a scholarship that helps preserve and strengthen its own foundations. Scholarship, at its best, involves mastering traditions and wrestling with their methods and claims, in order to free us to new insight. It is like jazz piano. Those who have a classical training are best able to improvise and to test musical limits." Burgess concludes: "Scholarship that shakes its own foundations is not necessarily good or responsible scholarship. Phi Beta Kappa can be most helpful when it carefully examines the philosophical and cultural assumptions that inform gender, race, class, and postcolonial inquiry, and when it engenders a vigorous, sustained debate across traditions and communities of inquiry, including those that do not take gender, race, and class to be ultimately determinative of human identity." In some circles, such homely wisdom is enough to induce an identity crisis.

■ You likely won't see the prestige media crying "McCarthyism!" but that is what it is. Richard Couser of Concord, New Hampshire, sends along a copy of the "New Hampshire Religious Right Directory," a blacklist put out by a Massachusetts outfit calling itself the Institute for First Amendment Studies (for First Amendment studies but obviously not for the First Amendment). On the list are the names of some 325 New Hampshire citizens who have committed un-American acts such as sending a contribution to the American Family Association or attending a meeting of the Christian Coalition. While labeled "confidential," the list was circulated to school boards, employers, and others who might want to "do something" about these dues-paying members or fellow travellers of the religious right. When the *Manchester Union Leader* exposed these nefarious goings on, the Governor, State Board of Education, and others appropriately condemned the witchhunt. The blacklist suggests that tolerance is fine so far as it goes, but it should not be extended to folk who go to the extreme of opposing liberalism.

■ Since the Warren Court, which was greatly bolstered in this way of thinking by the *Brown* decision on school desegregation, many constitutional scholars have advanced the idea that it is the role of the judiciary to moderate a national dialogue on the values by which we are to live. The idea was expressed in an extreme form by a majority of the Supreme Court in the 1992 *Casey* decision, wherein the Court claimed that citizens were obliged to follow the lead of the Court now that it had reached a conclusion on the national debate over abortion. This is a novel and dangerous idea, writes Gregory C. Sisk, Professor of Law at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. The idea that the judiciary is to be a national forum for moral deliberation has no basis in the Constitution itself and for 175 years of American history would have struck jurists as absurd. Writing in the *Rutgers Law Review*, Sisk says, "Our foundational charter begins with the words, 'We the People of the United States,' thereby proclaiming in whose name the Constitution is written and by whose sufferance the government holds power. We, the People, still grow up in families, live in neighborhoods, attend local schools, and belong to churches, synagogues, and voluntary organizations. It is here, in our local communities, that we must nourish values and a sense of belonging. It is here, where the moral bonds of voluntary attachment have not yet been stretched beyond the breaking point, that true dialogue, especially over the highest things—matters of ultimate truth and value, can be maintained. It is here that we must seek and realize our aspirations for the future. The Constitution is an anchor for our ship of state, not the sail for our voyage to tomorrow. The Framers did ordain certain enduring principles, which guard us on our journey and keep the passing waves of tyranny from crashing over us. When the winds of change blast us forward at dangerous speed or when we tack too hard to port or starboard, we depend upon judges of fortitude and legal wisdom to cast the anchor overboard and keep us moored in our traditions of liberty and democratic government. We have not, however, appointed an oligarchy of judges as our governors in law or our counselors in morality. The commission to seek a better and more virtuous society belongs to each of us as individuals and as a collection of diverse local communities and institutions of voluntary attachment. We, the living, must work out our own passage to the new millennium."

■ We are often asked where to get hard-to-get books. There are a number of excellent sources around, some of which advertise regularly in these pages. And others of which should. For instance, Eighth Day Books, 3700 E. Douglas #40, Wichita KS 67208. Their catalogue of classics in religion, philosophy, history, and literature is very much worth having.

■ Our readers include some very fervent proponents of getting the Brits out of Northern Ireland, to judge by the letters received in response to a small item on Hollywood's lionizing of Gerry Adams. We quoted British journalist Simon Jenkins who said the Hollywood celebrities, including Oliver Stone, were getting a second-hand "thrilling tingle" by their association with IRA violence. Whatever the merits of the Irish question, William D. Livingston of

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Colorado Springs writes to say that Jenkins got Oliver Stone all wrong. Livingston, himself a veteran of Vietnam, reports that Stone volunteered for the U.S. Army and served fifteen months in Vietnam, much of it in the combat that formed the basis for his movie *Platoon*. Livingston concludes, "In short, stuff Jenkins and his false assumption." (I think that's one of those Brit expressions.)

■ Karl Keating is President of Catholic Answers in San Diego and he was displeased by our comment on the criticism of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" by one of his colleagues that was published in the organization's magazine, *This Rock*. Mr. Keating wants us to know that that was simply the opinion of one staff member, and that Catholic Answers is favorably disposed toward the declaration. We are pleased to take note of the fact.

■ "Adoption reform" sounds like a dandy idea. Unfortunately, it is the language frequently employed by those who are adamantly opposed to adoption. As with so many other questions, adoption is embroiled in the debate over abortion, with pro-abortion forces claiming that adoption is a stratagem of pro-lifers aimed at limiting "reproductive rights." In December, the New Jersey Assembly voted to tear up promises of confidentiality made to women who had placed their children for adoption. This was after hearings in which it was repeatedly claimed that adopted kids are sick and in need of "healing reunions." The anti-adoption groups turned out people who complained that adoption had ruined their lives. Of course those whose lives would be ruined by opening the records could not testify, since to do so would destroy the very privacy they want to protect. So the Assembly voted to pass out the names of birthparents when an adopted child turns eighteen. Thousands of women who trusted the promises of confidentiality when they placed their children for adoption may have their lives severely disrupted. The next step feared by the National Council for Adoption is that legislatures will tear up the other half of the adoption covenant, informing birthparents about adoptive families and giving them the legal right to make contact with the child at his or her adoptive home, or even at school. Some birthparents might, for any number of reasons, want to do that, but the result, says the Council, is tantamount to "co-parenting without any corresponding responsibility." Millions of American parents want to adopt children. With sensible laws and public policies, many more children would be adopted. Confidentiality all around is essential to encouraging adoption. The New Jersey Assembly—and other states might well follow its lead—is, in our view, headed in exactly the wrong direction. The key person to contact is Senator Louis Bassano, 324 Chestnut St., Union, NJ 07083.

■ This past Christmas, Barney's, a big men's clothing outfit in New York, had in its display window a nativity scene with the several figures depicted as animals, including Mary as a very seductive feline wench. The Catholic League got on their case and Barney's pulled the display. Not so with Hallmark and a good many "Christian" book and gift stores around the country. They carried a "Cherished Teddies Nativity Crêche" peddled by Enesco Imports (P.O. Box 1427, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007). It's part of the enormously popular "Precious Moments" line. Mrs. Kathleen Miller of Arlington Heights, Illinois, was not amused by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph being portrayed as teddy bears. Unlike, for instance, the fairy tale "The Three Bears," she wrote to Enesco, "The birth of Jesus Christ is not fictional. It is not 'cute.' . . . The central message of Christmas is that Jesus Christ became a *human being*, born of a human mother, to begin a process that would transform human beings into heirs of the One Who Cared Enough to Send the Very Best." Enesco responded that the nativity scene "is only interpretive and not meant as an act of sacrilege." "While we respect your personal feelings regarding this representation of the Nativity, we also must take into consideration the opinions of those other consumers who enjoy and appreciate a particular artist's artistic interpretation of a familiar Christmas scene." First, Mrs. Miller is some kind of philistine who fails to appreciate the "art" of "Precious Moments." Second, Enesco has a moral obligation to consumers who, like Enesco, do not recognize sacrilege when they see it. Third, albeit unstated, there is a dollar to be made (if we are correctly informed on the popularity of these things, very big dollars to be made) from suggesting to children that God in Christ became a teddy bear. In sum: You have your idea of Christmas, Mrs. Miller, and we have ours, and there are sentimental suckers out there who don't know the difference. So don't try to impose your values in a way that prevents us from imposing our demand on stores that they take the entire line, including the teddy bear nativity and other profitable vulgarities, or nothing at all. After all, as with other forms of pornography, you are free not to buy it. It's the American Way. (Readers who believe that corporate responsibility is another facet of the American Way might want to drop a note to Enesco or have a word with the manager of their local Hallmark store.)

■ Leafing through an issue of *Reflections*, a Yale Divinity School publication that contained a lecture I had delivered there, I came across a sermon by Howard Moody, the recently retired head of Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village. The biographical sketch of Mr. Moody included the fact that he had organized "the Clergy Consultation Services on Abortion (1967) which championed the rights of women to choose childbearing." An

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intriguing formulation, that. The reader might protest that it is simple nonsense. When did women not have the right to bear children? But that is to miss the point. The accent is on "choose," and the implication is that one cannot truly choose one thing unless one is equally free to choose the opposite thing. One cannot choose to give birth to the child unless one can choose to kill the child. It is nonsense, to be sure, but it is deep nonsense—nonsense at the heart of a culture that knows no higher good than choice.

■ Our local paper advertises with billboards depicting someone happily at work over the legend, "I got my job through the *New York Times*." Back in the bad old days of the Cold War, a favorite conservative cartoon showed such a billboard with Fidel Castro's picture. What kind of church is it that would boast, "We got our pastor through the *New York Times*"? It is the Congregational Church of South Dennis, Massachusetts, which placed this in the classifieds: "PASTOR F/T Dynamic, exp'd prof'l sought to lead & aggressively build all phases of 175-yr-old Cape Cod parish. Goal-oriented emphasis on membership growth, visitation, Christian Education & financial growth. Incentivised compensation pkg." The last item presumably means that s/he gets a piece of the take. Church growth comes to Cape Cod. Where does Lyle Schaller take his vacations?

■ Clause Four of the charter of the British Labor Party calls for "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange." Socialists view Clause Four as the heart of their creed, and were understandably upset last year when Labor leader Tony Blair, eager to modify the perception that Labor is stuck in radicalisms past, called for its elimination. "Socialism is the name of our dream," wrote Irving Howe, and many of his persuasion agree. It may be that in 1995 socialism is no longer a believable option, but must we disown the dream? That seems to be the plaint of the *Tablet*, a Catholic journal that asks, "If Clause Four must go, what would replace it?" Blair had declared in a speech that "those who seriously believe we cannot improve on words written for the world of 1918—when we are now in 1995—are not learning from our history, but merely living in it." Yes, responds the *Tablet*, "But where is that alternative form of words?" What should Blair do? The editor proposes that he should clearly commit himself and Labor to renationalizing the British rail system, which has been denationalized by the Conservatives. This is public policy serving as a "form of words." Returning to a socialized railway is a long way from the grand goal of "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange," but at least it would keep alive the name of the *Tablet*'s dream.

■ *Animal Theology*, published in the UK last year, is authored by Andrew Linzey, who holds what is described as the world's first post in theology and animal welfare, at Mansfield College, Oxford. Some issues back we made a whimsical comment on some observations by Mr. Linzey that were reported in the *Tablet*. Mr. Linzey was not amused, as we learned in an outraged telephone call from Oxford demanding that we publish a piece by him refuting the position attributed to him. We assured him, in our most mollifying editorial manner, that we only reported what the *Tablet* had quoted him as saying, and we could not commit ourselves to publishing his statement sight unseen. He was not happy. Now here is Andrew Linzey once again back in the pages of the *Tablet* and charging that "Traditional Roman Catholic teaching puts animals beyond the moral pale—we are seen to have no direct duties to them." As evidence, he points to the assertion in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that it is "contrary to human dignity" to cause animals to suffer needlessly. "The point being made," says Linzey, "is not that such suffering offends animals, but that it offends humans." An author of *Animal Theology* may perhaps be excused for not knowing, but anyone familiar with Catholic theology or, for that matter, Christian theology knows that human beings are uniquely capable of sinning, and every morally wrong act is contrary to human dignity. Whether or not animals are capable of being offended, they are certainly subject to being harmed, and it is contrary to human dignity to inflict harm unnecessarily. Human beings are morally accountable; animals are not. Any effort to suggest some kind of moral equivalence—whether in terms of rights or duties—between animals and human beings is, in our view, quite wrongheaded. The well-being of the nonhuman world, including animals, is deeply dependent upon our continuing to accent the singularity of human dignity, a dignity that entails responsibility for all of God's creation. That is the point being made by the *Catechism*, and it is a pity that it seems to be lost on the likes of Mr. Linzey. . . . Excuse me, I'm told there's an urgent call from Oxford.

■ Also in the *Tablet*, Father Richard McBrien, formerly chair of theology at Notre Dame, reviews David L. Edwards' *What Is Catholicism? An Anglican Responds to the Official Teaching of the Roman Catholic Church* (Mowbray). According to McBrien, the book challenges Catholic teaching on a host of subjects ranging from papal authority to sexual ethics to the ordination of women and clerical celibacy. He says the response of Catholics "who are up to date in their grasp of theology and biblical studies" will be similar to his own judgment: "good book, good ideas, but nothing new." The book might achieve its purpose, says McBrien, "if it prompts one or two Catholic theologians to forsake their

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customary inhibitions and write the same kind of honest book from a Catholic perspective." That would be something new? Father McBrien is being much too modest in failing to mention that he and a host of others have already written that book many times over.

■ New Yorkers, or at least New Yorkers who live in Manhattan, are inveterate walkers. It is therefore not surprising that snippets of overheard street talk are a staple of conversation. For example, the other day two bedraggled derelicts brown-bagging Thunderbird or perhaps some more choice vintage while tottering against the fence of Gramercy Park on East 20th Street. Says the one to the other, "I didn't say it wasn't a good idea. I said you'd never get it funded." Which perhaps answers the question of what happens to failed directors of think tanks. It occurred to me that they might have been failed academics, but failed academics have tenure.

■ Part of the charm of Anne Roiphe's style is that one is really not sure where parody leaves off and where she is unfurling her banner of personal conviction. Whatever she intends, the following column in the *New York Observer* nicely catches the apocalyptic tonalities among those accustomed to occupying the commanding heights of our political culture. "Boys and girls, the liberal Tinker Bell lies dying. You can hardly hear her tiny ding-dong. Clap, clap, if you want her to survive the long Republican night. There she lies, poisoned by Captain Rush and all the other pirates of the American Dream. Her voice was never loud, but her wings were once diaphanous, catching the light of human hope. Lately, they've turned soggy and ragged in the political rain." Ms. Roiphe goes on and on with a catalogue of the terrible things in the offing now that conservatives have presumed to declare themselves the political majority, and she ends with this: "These days I'm feeling as if the Rosenbergs died in vain, as if the roar of American Firsters is coming over the mountaintops, as if the cruelty of politics, me and mine, not you and yours is here again—as if Sinclair Lewis' Main Street with all its hypocrisy and its sanctimonious clubbiness has become Pennsylvania Avenue and Fifth Avenue. The Republicans are not really in power. It's the Dixiecrats in Republican clothing that are preening on our national stage and they say nice words about equality but they don't mean it. They will go out and find another Vietnam if they can. They will toss weapons into space so that God will not be safe in His house and they will let the trees and the waters of the earth die for their greed. And all this will go on until the liberals stop choking on old ideas and old failures and speak out in a voice that will reach the outer precincts with furious, lusty battle cry. Till then I'll stay in never-never land, where the *New York Times* has no home delivery and Mayor Giuliani never vacations, and even fools don't take bell curves at full speed. If you believe in fairies, boys and girls, clap as hard as you can, with both hands, please. The curtain is coming down."

■ The school prayer amendment seems to be an on-again off-again thing with this Congress, and there's no telling where it will be by the time this sees print. Amid all the usual and weary arguments surrounding that question, refreshing common sense pops up here and there, sometimes from unexpected quarters. This, for example, from Jeremy A. Rabkin who teaches government at Cornell: "It may not always be possible to satisfy everyone. If a school prayer amendment removes the federal judiciary from its current role as umpire of cultural etiquette in this area, some families are sure to find the consequences disturbing to their sensibilities. If the most insistently liberal or secularist students find their schools to be intolerably religious or conservative or whatever, they are free to attend private schools more to their liking—which is exactly the advice given to students who sought some acknowledgment of religion in their schools over the past thirty years. Indeed, many and perhaps most conservatives would support some form of government aid to these private liberal havens—as long as the courts would also allow aid to private schools operated under religious auspices. Even if not finally adopted, a prayer amendment would send a strong signal to the Supreme Court to leave difficult issues such as accommodation of religion to the good sense of accountable officials at the state and local levels. Whatever those officials might do, they are unlikely to offend more people than the federal courts have done."

Sources: James K. Fitzpatrick criticism of "distributism," *New Oxford Review*, December 1994. Dermot Quinn on distributism, *Chesterton Review*, May-August 1994. Marc Cooper on the Christian right in Colorado Springs, *Nation*, January 2, 1994.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: "Judeo-Christian Sexual Ethics Through the Ages" in *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 30, 1994. Daniel Callahan letter on physician-assisted suicide, *New England Journal of Medicine*, December 15, 1994. John P. Burgess on scholarship, *Key Reporter*, Autumn 1994. Gregory C. Sisk on Supreme Court rule, *Rutgers Law Review*, Summer 1994. On "the rights of women to choose childbearing," *Reflections*, Summer-Fall 1994. Pastor's ad in *New York Times* classified, January 15, 1995. On British Labor Party, *Tablet*, January 14, 1995. Andrew Linzey on animal rights, *Tablet*, January 14, 1995. Richard McBrien review of *What Is Catholicism?* in *Tablet*, January 7, 1995. Anne Roiphe on the current liberal mood, *New York Observer*, January 23, 1995. Jeremy Rabkin on the proposed school prayer amendment, *American Spectator*, February 1995.

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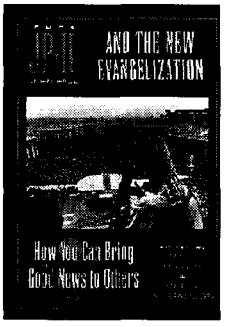

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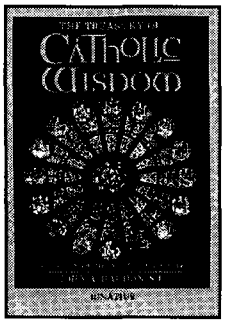

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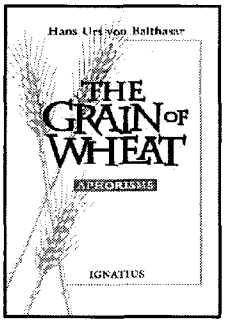

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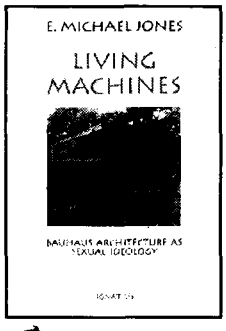

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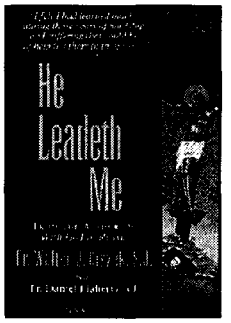

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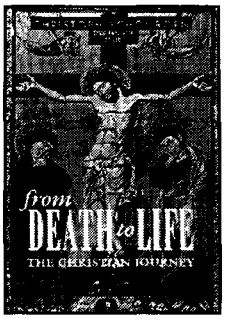

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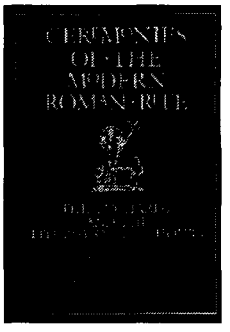

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